



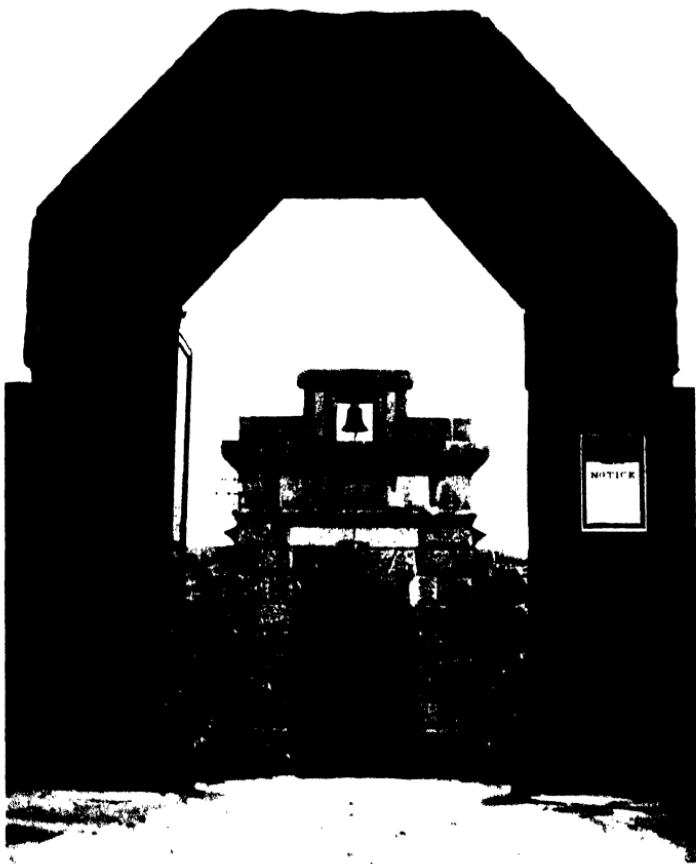
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# DARTMOOR PRISON







*Photo: G. P. A., London*

ENTRANCE TO DARTMOOR PRISON

# DARTMOOR PRISON

A RECORD OF 126 YEARS OF PRISONER  
OF WAR AND CONVICT LIFE, 1806-1932

*by*

A. J. RHODES

WITH 13 ILLUSTRATIONS

"Any man sent to Dartmoor might have exclaimed :  
'Hail, horrors ! Hail, thou profoundest hell !  
Receive thy new possessor.'  
"For everyone ordered to this prison counted himself lost."

CHARLES ANDREWS  
An American prisoner of war, 1812-1815

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*A Prison Chaplain on Dartmoor*, by Clifford Rickards.

*Leaves from my Prison Diary*, by Michael Davitt.

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## FOREWORD

THE facts relating to Dartmoor Prison in some of its aspects are stranger than fiction. In presenting them I have not yielded to the temptation to allow imagination a free run, but rather endeavoured to draw a faithful picture of the principal episodes in the extraordinary history of the prison, the foundations of which were laid one hundred and twenty-six years ago.

It is strange that, though much was written of the prison in the days immediately following its use for the confinement of French and American prisoners of war, the public to-day has only vague ideas on the subject. The books, American and French, penned with quills dipped in gall, and now rare, provide a fascinating study, and at this distance of time it is possible to read them without resenting the bitter things said of the British people and Government, their national traits and administrative system ; and with a realization that these were but the outpourings of the anguished hearts of captives who had been in travail. The earliest of the books was published at Boston in 1816, within a year of the release from Dartmoor of the American prisoners.

A quarter of a century ago Mr. (now Sir) Basil Thomson, who spent seven years at Dartmoor as deputy-governor and governor, published his story of Dartmoor Prison, which includes the record of the first three or four decades following the adaptation of the great pile of buildings to the accommodation of

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convicts. One or two of the old county histories contain brief descriptions of the prison, and in days past it was also the subject of discussion by the Devonshire Association and the Dartmoor Preservation Society, more especially with reference to the enclosure in the prison farm of a considerable area of moorland.

Searching the files of newspapers (some dating back more than one hundred and twenty years) is tedious work, but I found it fruitful. My own knowledge of the prison, gained as a journalist, and experience of escapes and other incidents, including the great mutiny of January 24, 1932, cover a long period. I am also indebted to His Majesty's Prison Commissioners for information regarding prison routine and administration.

In this volume I have marshalled the facts, and though the result is but an outline of the amazing story of the prison, it is, I believe, comprehensive.

I am not concerned to criticize our prison system or its administration, but I have something to say about official reticence, and the evils that arise from it.

In describing the escapes of more recent years, I have not used names, because the men concerned are living to-day, and, for a similar reason, in writing the story of the mutiny I have not identified prisoners involved, except those who were convicted after trial.

# DARTMOOR PRISON



# DARTMOOR PRISON

## CHAPTER I

### A CESSPOOL OF HUMANITY

SIR GEORGE McGRATH, who was medical officer at Dartmoor in 1814–16, described the repellent fortress-prison in which he served as “a great tomb of the living,” and more than a century later, in November 1927, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, then Home Secretary, after an official visit, characterized it as “a cesspool of humanity.”

This huge sepulchre, in which thousands of prisoners of war for long periods lost their freedom, and hundreds their manhood, and in which the bones of nearly 1500 who died in captivity remain buried to-day, has, I suppose, no parallel in this country or in any part of the British Empire. Built for the accommodation of prisoners of war, its site, planning, and internal organization have no approximation in the war prisons or internment camps established in any of the belligerent countries during the Great War of 1914–18. Even men familiar with the latter have little conception of the conditions that prevailed at Dartmoor in those far-off days.

After peace had at last liberated the prisoners of war and repatriated them to France and America, there followed decades during which the deserted prison halls deteriorated and decayed, and it seemed that it would be left to Time to complete the ruin of a place

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of evil associations. But the breakdown of the system of transportation of convicted criminals, due mainly to the objection of the Colonies to being flooded with the dregs of the Home Country's population, gave birth to the proposal to use Dartmoor as a convict prison. Discussed for several years, it was ultimately adopted, and from 1850 down to the present time it has been the most famed, or notorious, of our penal establishments—except for a short period when it was used to accommodate the Conscientious Objectors during the Great War ; for then some of the prisoners of military age were given the opportunity of war service, the remainder being moved to other prisons, and a large number of Conscientious Objectors occupied the vacated cells.

The daily life of the Conscientious Objectors was, of course, very different from that of the convicts. Although domiciled in the prison they had a great deal of liberty. They were required to work ten hours per day on five days in the week, and six and a half hours on Saturday. Their labour was done in the workshops of the prison, and on the farm. They cut a new road across a section of the moor in the neighbourhood of Two Bridges, and this is known to-day as "Conshies' Road."

One of their various diversions was to stage what may be termed a series of tableaux in the workshops, each party of men wearing prison garb, and the various scenes were photographed as representative of convicts at work.

The Conscientious Objectors were not prisoners in the ordinary sense. They were at liberty each evening after ceasing work until 9.30, when they were required to return to their cells, or, as the authorities preferred to call them, their quarters. Their stay at Dartmoor began early in 1917 and ended in the spring of 1919.

Sinn Feiners were also confined at Dartmoor

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following the rebellion in Ireland, and among them was the future President of the Irish Free State, Mr. De Valera, who had opportunity of testing whether mail-bag making is an art or a craft.

The sinister repute of the prison in its earlier days clung to it during the first phase of its use for the confinement of convicts, the causes in the main being the experiments then being made in prison administration, the inefficiency of the military guard—an inefficiency due to dislike by the soldiers of their job—and the consequent very low standard of discipline. Assaults on guards, and even on the governor and deputy - governor, were common. Escapes were frequent, and, contrary to the popular notion that no one has ever succeeded in escaping from Dartmoor, many were successful. In the course of years, however, improvements were effected in prison administration and the treatment of prisoners, and the substitution of trained prison officers for soldiers as guards was also a beneficial change.

A period of such peace as is possible in a penal establishment followed, broken by an occasional assault on an officer or an attempted escape by a convict. All the time reform has been in progress, the system being directed towards reclamation instead of being wholly punitive. One of the changes introduced in recent years has been the reduction of the number of convicts at Dartmoor, where at times there have been as many as 1200, so that, when the mutiny occurred on January 24, 1932, the total had fallen to about 440, and further reductions have since been made. These men were almost solely of the habitual criminal type, otherwise "old lags," who had served previous sentences of imprisonment or penal servitude.

But, whatever the internal changes, the prison has always been the same to the public. The morbid

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curiosity that in the early days, when travelling over Dartmoor was far more difficult than it is to-day, drew crowds of sightseers to the entrance, and so impeded the guards that escapes were made easy, now finds vent in another way, and to check it the Prison Commissioners forbid the snapshotting, by amateur and other photographers, of the convicts passing along the public road between the prison and farm.

The suitability of Dartmoor as a convict prison, one of the problems raised at intervals in recent years, became more insistent following the mutiny. Since 1927 three of His Majesty's Secretaries of State for Home Affairs have visited the gaol—Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Mr. J. R. Clynes, and Sir Herbert Samuel. It was following his visit that the first-named, replying to his own question—"What hope have the men at Dartmoor?"—said, " Honestly, very little. It is really a cesspool of humanity. I suppose there must be some residuum which no training or help will ever improve, but I am personally convinced that sooner or later the nation will demand that it should be protected from men who simply live upon crime. Surely after a certain number of convictions for serious crime a better form of preventive detention could be provided, where the really social enemy could be maintained in, perhaps, pleasanter circumstances than at Dartmoor, either for his whole remainder of life or until such a day as he might no longer be dangerous to the community."

Sir William Joynson-Hicks had in mind rather the necessity of making use of the prison than its suitability to modern needs. "Dartmoor is sometimes regarded as a more forbidding prison than others," he said, "partly because of its lonely, remote, and exposed position, and partly because guns have to be carried by officers outside the walls. There are miles of

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open moor all round, and special precautions have to be taken to prevent escapes. The prison is continued, not because its position is specially suitable for a convict prison, but simply because use must be made of the extensive accommodation existing there."

On this subject of suitability, Mr. J. R. Clynes appears to have been a little more impressed than was his predecessor at the Home Office. "I came away with the feeling that Dartmoor is a very much better place for the purpose of correction and improvement of the individual than the public ever imagines," he said. "A feature which very much impressed me was the manner in which the prisoners are employed. Many are engaged in shoemaking and repairing; there are wheelwrights, carpenters' and blacksmiths' shops, a laundry, bakery, etc. Work on the land is much sought after, perhaps because of its open-air life and its sense of greater freedom; and there is useful, and, on the whole, not too heavy work done in the quarry. The principle of selection rests upon the prisoner's prior training, or on his preference for particular employment."

Stone-cutting in the stone sheds is a skilled occupation not mentioned by Mr. Clynes, and the repair of the buildings provides another form of convict labour.

The sombre character of the prison, to which Sir William Joynson-Hicks referred, also struck Mr. Clynes, who said, "As you approach Dartmoor, particularly on a grey, forbidding day, the prison presents a very grim appearance and makes you feel what a chilling place it must be, but inside (making allowances that it is a prison), you find many evidences of a fine human touch and of reasonable care for the physical needs, and even personal comforts, of those who are deprived of their liberty. Though the

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prisoners are far from being pampered, the central idea of the present system is that of reform."

Further changes were under consideration at the time of the visit of Sir Herbert Samuel, just two or three weeks before the mutiny, but he did not take the public into his confidence in the same degree as did his predecessors. What the future of the prison is to be has not yet been fully revealed, although Sir Herbert, in course of a statement in the House of Commons on the crime and prisons of the country, stated that Dartmoor would be reduced to small proportions. It is, he said, a costly place to maintain and not congenial to the staff and their families. A large reduction is being made in the establishments both at Dartmoor and Parkhurst by sending men to local prisons.

Whether Dartmoor will ultimately be closed entirely has been an oft-recurring problem, but it is unlikely that an establishment that cost in building and rebuilding something like £150,000 will be completely abandoned yet. It may be that it is not suitable for the accommodation of a great body of the worst criminals with whom the law has to deal, but the question of adaptation to the needs of other classes suggests itself. In addition to the workshops, that form an important part of the prison organization, there is a very large tract of land on which an enormous amount of labour and money has been expended. Hundreds of acres of moorland have been reclaimed and cultivated, and what was once dreary waste and bog land has been made productive. And though farming operations cost the State more money than is derived from them, yet the labour they provide for the prisoners is of a higher, more interesting and useful nature than much in which men are engaged in other gaols in the country.

But assuming that farming is abandoned as an

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uneconomic proposition, what is to happen to the hundreds of reclaimed acres? If cultivation by convicts does not pay, how is it to be made profitable by private enterprise, which has to meet a heavy wages bill? Because of its situation and nature, the land would have little market value, and not only would the expenditure upon it of labour and money be lost to the State, but the whole of the cultivated area would revert to its original condition—yet another demonstration that Dartmoor is unconquerable—and a useful training ground be lost. One way of utilizing the prison and the land would be to reserve it for the younger class of offender—youths for whom there is hope of both reclamation and training. In the workshops they might be taught trades, and on the land trained in farming and market-gardening.

The decline of the craft of stone-cutting has been deplored in the south-west, which has, besides granite, some beautiful veined-stone. The reason suggested is the disinclination of youth to be apprenticed to the craft. It does not sound convincing, and I am inclined to the opinion that the granite quarries and sheds suggest possibilities of training the reclaimable criminal in a very useful trade. I am not here referring to the stone-breaking system formerly operated. That was carried out in open cells facing the yard. The convicts sat on wooden blocks, the hammers being on chains to prevent them from being flung at officers. A former Governor, Captain Morgan, abolished this form of punishment, for such it was.

Work on the farm has always been the most popular in the prison. The outdoor life, the change, and the freedom as compared with the confinement of the shops, are appreciated and sought after. The men take an interest in their work, delight in the growing crops, have a real affection for the

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horses, and a pride in the cattle and other farm stock.

One of the solicitors engaged in the defence of the men involved in the mutiny, and who spent a considerable time in the prison interviewing his clients, was immensely impressed by the depressing, nauseating atmosphere of the place—an atmosphere, I suppose, more or less common to all prisons. "Rabbit hutches in vast warrens," was his description of the cells in the various halls, and he suggested that if the youthful offender could be sent there, even for a few hours, the experience would cure him and turn him from a career of crime much more effectually than does putting him on probation. "He would never again want to risk going there or to any similar place," my friend remarked.

The same thought was expressed by the Earl of Devon, President of the Devon and Exeter Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, following a visit to Dartmoor.

"I went over the prison," he said, "and if I had got a criminal taint in me I should not have had it after having been inside. If you have any criminal instincts, get an order from the Home Secretary and go round Dartmoor and you will thereafter live a righteous and godly life. Do you realize what it is not to be able to speak for more than twenty minutes a day, and you have got to do everything on the 'tick'?"

Much has been said, by way of palliation of the outbreak of the convicts, about the terrible situation of the prison—in the midst of an inhospitable moor, and dreary sweeps of bogland and irreclaimable waste, with a bitterly cold climate, a heavy rainfall, periodical blizzards, and dense fogs. The conditions and monotony of the moor are said to be such as to break the spirit of any man, however criminal he may be, and something of the same thought was expressed

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by the Dartmoor poet, Carrington, a hundred years ago :

“ O who that drags  
A captive’s chain would feel his soul refresh’d  
Though scenes like those of Eden should arise  
Around his hated cage. But here green youth  
Lost all its freshness, manhood all its prime,  
And age sank to the tomb, ere peace her trump  
Exulting blew ; and still upon the eye,  
In dread monotony at morn, noon, eve,  
Arose the moor—the moor.”

But there is another side of the picture. Rain and fogs and blizzards are not perpetual on Dartmoor. There are periods when Nature smiles and the great expanse reflects her most genial moods, when during the summer and autumn the desolate hills and valleys become rich in colours of golden gorse, purple heather, pink ling, and green bracken, when the sun shines, and bracing breezes are a tonic both to the body and soul. Years ago, prison medical officers discovered that Dartmoor was the place above all others to which to send consumptive prisoners. In a pamphlet, *Dartmoor Prison, Past and Present*, published for private circulation in the '90's, Captain Vernon Harris, who had been governor of the gaol, wrote :

“ Criminals received at this establishment are men who have been sentenced to penal servitude, and none less than for five years, and some for life. A large portion of those sent to Dartmoor are convicts who, having some malady or malformation, are rendered unfit for severe labour at other institutions, but who, when employed here upon work to which they are accustomed, are capable of producing satisfactory results in all branches of industry. Many are sent to Dartmoor for health’s sake ; for early stages of chest complaints the climate is most efficacious. Medical officers have from time to

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time recorded their opinion of the great advantages which are derived by phthisical patients from residence at such an altitude above the sea-level, and the improved conditions of the men moved from London and the manufacturing towns goes to prove the correctness of their views."

Amid all the changes introduced with the idea of humanizing the system, discipline, with only occasional exceptions to the rule, has been maintained, in spite of the fact that only men with the worst records have been sent to Dartmoor.

Apart from those engaged in the workshops and on the land, some convicts are employed on jobs outside the prison under guard of a senior officer. They are on their honour not to attempt to escape, and it is the testimony of officers that when men give their word it is seldom broken. They have their own code of honour, which they scrupulously observe. After two and a half years convicts of good behaviour are allowed to read a newspaper from which crime stories have been cut. After four years they are permitted to smoke, buying tobacco (and groceries, too, if they require them) out of the allowance of 2s. 6d. per month with which they are credited. The quantity is restricted to two ounces a week and smoking is allowed for one hour after the midday meal and another in the evening, except on Sundays, when the privilege runs from 1.30 to 4 p.m.

A former chaplain, the Rev. John Cawley, tells a good story of the sense of humour of a lover of the fragrant weed. One day, just as the chaplain had finished his pipe, a convict asked :

"What's your baccy?"

"Just an ordinary mixture," was the reply.

"Try mine," the convict suggested.

"What do you smoke?" cautiously inquired the chaplain.

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With twinkling eyes the man replied, "Why, Four Nuns—none nicer, none yesterday, none to-day, and none to-morrow!"

Every Saturday morning the ten minutes' service in the chapel is followed by the reading of a news bulletin from which crime stories are excluded. On Sunday, after the service, the convicts listen to the reading of the football results, in which they are keenly interested. They follow the achievements of their favourite teams with as much zest as does any outside enthusiast.

Formerly visits were paid to the prison by members of the Plymouth Rotary Club, Tavistock Toc H, and social workers from Kelly and Plymouth Colleges. Individual visits to men in the cells were made. Occasional concerts are given, and the quality of the programme has to be studied because many of the men are musicians and keen critics. Visits by outside organizations were suspended following the mutiny, and have not been renewed. Instructional lectures are given, and there are many earnest students in classes in French, book-keeping, mechanics, agriculture, and other subjects that, properly applied, would be useful to them when they regain their liberty. French is one of the most popular subjects.

A liberally stocked library is extensively used, the men who are well conducted being allowed more books than those who are not so classed. Sometimes applications are received from prisoners for text-books to be sent to them from outside the prison, and provided a man is well behaved, his request is never refused. The text-books when finished with become the property of the prison and pass into the library for the use of other prisoners. Novels are in demand, and books of travel are also popular.

Prisoners find interests in varied directions. As I have already stated, there are good musicians in the

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prison, and at the time of the mutiny they had an excellent band, with one of the prison officers as bandmaster. At the trial of mutinous prisoners it was stated that one of them was so interested that he provided the band with music at his own cost. I suppose it was inevitable, when it was suggested that the band might have a regimental march, that one of the bandsmen should urge that they could not do better than adopt, "The Little Grey Home in the West!"

The chapel organist at the time of the visit of Mr. Clynes was one whom the then Home Secretary described as "a gentle-looking soul, whose manner and courtesy charmed me, and I could see he was absorbed in his playing. It was not the first sentence he was serving. A weakness for deception in social life brought him back."

Until the governor's office was burnt down during the riot there hung in it some clever paintings by a former convict, who, in addition to being an undoubtedly artist, was an ingenious and resourceful improviser. His paintings were executed on slate, and the pigments used were a mixture of colour wash—ochre, yellow, and so on—scraped from walls, boot-blacking, and other unusual material likely to provide colour when mixed with water. The convict, an Irishman, was temperamental, and his pictures were said to express his moods at the time he painted them.

When the Prince of Wales visited the prison he was much interested in the paintings, and while studying one depicting a couple of Dartmoor ponies in full gallop over the heather, with manes and tails flying in the wind, he was told that it expressed the old man's feelings when storm predominated within. The quieter scenes were representative of the artist at peace with himself and the world. An excellent

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portrait of the King when he, too, as Prince of Wales, visited the prison, was another example of the artist's work, and it is hinted that a Royal critic humorously inquired, "What was the old man's mood when he painted that?"

When Lady Findlay and a party visited the prison while the mutiny trial was in progress, it was stated, in rather critical vein, that it was the first time women had ever been admitted to the prison. But this was inaccurate. Her Majesty the Queen was probably the first woman visitor. She accompanied the King, then Prince of Wales, when he inspected the prison. Viscountess Astor, M.P., has also visited Dartmoor, and I think has the distinction of being the only woman to interview a prisoner in his cell. The man was an American: hence her special interest in him.

Of course these are exceptional cases, although it may be recalled that at one time it was common for wives and families of prison officers to attend service in the Anglican Chap.l. They were accommodated in the gallery; while before and even since the mutiny wives and children of officers who were Catholics attended Mass in the Roman Catholic Chapel, being screened from the convicts.

Other visitors to the prison include two former Prime Ministers, the Earl of Rosebery and Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Winston Churchill is one of the Secretaries of State for Home Affairs who have inspected its internal features and organization. The visitor who created the greatest furore in Princetown, however, was the famous jockey, Fred Archer, who was accompanied by his bride. This was not long before his tragic death.

To return to the prisoners. One man took himself seriously as a linguist. He had lived in the Transvaal, and conceived the notion of translating the Bible into

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Dutch as a means of relieving the tedium of the long hours spent in his cell. Another claimed to be a student of the Hebrew tongue, not because he was a Jew, but as a man interested in Hebraic. Yet another prided himself on his knowledge of the classics. Having read *Virgil* he asked for a *Livy*, or some other work. The chaplain to whom the request was made was incredulous, and asked the man whether he could translate *Virgil*. His reply was, "Try me. I have read it more than once." The chaplain opened the book at haphazard, and indicated a passage, which the convict read with ease. "He translated it better than I could have done it myself," was the chaplain's comment when telling the story.

The prison has its poets. Some of them are humorists. For example, there is the author of "The Lay of the Lagged Minstrel," who, with pencil and slate, described racily the life of a convict at Dartmoor. His "Lay" is reproduced later in this volume.

Then there was the man who enlarged upon the request of the prisoner who wanted a book from the library entitled *Less Miserable*:

"Though we love not your facial expression,  
And your lessons make no great impression,  
Pray issue *Less Miserable*  
To Abe Lachrymosable,  
Who'd be rid of his Moor-bid depression."

Probably the original applicant was not so ignorant of Victor Hugo's masterpiece as he affected to be, but like his rhyming imitator was a humorist getting at the librarians who are also the schoolmasters.

Another humorist in verse is described by Michael Davitt in *Leaves from my Prison Diary*. The famous Irishman was at Dartmoor in the '70's, and in the cell adjoining his, for about twelve months, was one

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Crutchy Quinn, who had actually served in all the prisons named in the following lines :

“ MILLBANK for thick shins and graft at the pump,  
BROADMOOR for all lags as go off their chump ;  
BRIXTON for good toke and cocoa with fat,  
DARTMOOR for bad grub but plenty of chat ;  
PORTSMOUTH a blooming bad place for hard work ;  
CHATHAM for Sunday gives four ounces of pork ;  
PORTLAND is worst of the lot for to joke in ;  
For fetching a lagging there is no place like WOKING.”

Here is the effusion of a convict-poet who wrote to his wife in verse. After idealizing her cottage, he sang to her thus :

“ I love my sweet Jane,  
She’s buxom and fair,  
And she sings like a birdie  
To welcome me there.

So I mind not the hardships,  
Nor the troubles of life,  
For we keep up the courtship  
Although she’s my wife.”

Goodwin, whose sensational escape from Dartmoor and recapture are described later in this volume, was also something of a poet. In a thirty-verse poem written on his slate he sketched his adventures while he was at liberty. After hearing the “ Story of the Cross ” sung at Easter in the Prison Chapel, he also wrote his own version of it in verse and gave it to the Chaplain (Rev. C. Rickards). Here are the opening verses :

“ See from the Judgment Hall  
Jesus led forth,  
Now to be crucified  
On the Cross.

Oh, hear the mocking scoffs  
At Jesus hurled :  
At Christ the Lord and King  
Of the world.

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His diadem of thorns  
Is on His brow.  
Before Him in mocking  
Jest they bow."

The convict who included these lines in a letter to his father hoped their appeal would touch a responsive chord :

" Think gently of the erring ;  
And do not thou forget,  
However darkly stained by sin,  
He is thy brother yet—  
Heir of the self-same heritage,  
Child of the self-same God !  
He has but stumbled in the path  
Thou hast in weakness trod."

One result of the outbreak on January 24 has been much conjecture as to the manner in which men communicate with each other. Well, the prison is not a place of eternal silence. The general instruction given to officers is that the same amount of talking may be allowed as would take place in a well-ordered workshop in civil life. But there is a rule that when less talking or no talking is ordered, the command must immediately be obeyed. I have watched convicts at work outside the prison, and noted the keen way in which they go about their jobs, and that they discuss between themselves, and in consultation with the supervising officer, the best ways and means of performing them—just as ordinary workmen in civil life talk among themselves and consult their foremen. In this matter the officers are perfectly friendly and humane in their attitude to their charges.

The prisoners are expert lip readers ; a flicker of the eye, a facial movement, or the raising of a finger are also means of conveying information. Men working in different parts of the prison, with their means of communication limited in consequence, have been known to work out elaborate plans for escape. Another form of communication is tapping

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on the walls, or hot-water pipes that run through the cells, a sort of Morse code being used.

One of the causes of the disaffection that culminated in the great riot, urged by the convicts themselves—though Mr. Justice Finlay, in his summing-up at the trial, discounted the idea that it could have been a primary reason—was the quality of the food. Certain it is that no convincing proof was produced, and, if there was foundation for complaint, probably it lay, not in quality or quantity, but in an unappetizing monotony of diet at breakfast and supper. Mr. Clynes stated after his visit that “the men appear better fed at Dartmoor than many thousands of those who make up our population of unemployed and lower-paid wage-earners, who frequently do not earn a full week’s wages.”

I have heard prison officers assert that the food served to prisoners is better than that they are able to provide for their own families, and that the responsibility for the “watery porridge,” about which so much was heard, rested with prisoners who assist in the kitchens, and “who tampered with the food in order to fan the spirit of discontent and disaffection among their fellow-prisoners.” I do not know whether there is justification for such an allegation, but the evidence of the Governor was that porridge which he tasted and judged to be good was later found to be watery.

To the uninitiated the motto, “*Parcere subjectis*,” carved on the granite archway at the prison entrance, is ever a subject of conjecture. It comes from Virgil’s “Charge to the Roman People” :

“ *Hae tibi erunt artes : pacisque imponere morem,  
Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos,*”

which may be rendered into English as :

“ Be these your arts : to impose the rule of peace,  
To spare the conquered and abase the proud.”

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An old prison officer, who was rather a wag, solemnly explained to one inquiring visitor that the inscription was Italian. "I don't know the exact words," he said, "but it means if you once come in you don't get out again."

Even more racy was the rendering of a schoolboy, who, with characteristic wit and irreverence, gave it as the royal command, "Park here, O my subjects!"

## CHAPTER II

FRENCH OCCUPATION : “ A RECEPTACLE OF HUMAN FLESH ”

ACURIOUS example of history repeating itself is suggested by the prison at Dartmoor. Princetown is part of the civil parish of Lydford, which embraces a very large portion of the moor, and was for centuries the centre from which the Stannary Court exercised jurisdiction. In Lydford Castle, too, there was a dungeon described as “ one of the most heinous, contagious, and detestable places in the realm,” and of which William Browne, the Tavistock poet, in a satire written, it is believed, in 1664, declared :

“ To be therein one night its guest,  
‘Twere better to be stoned and prest.”

And again :

“ I know none gladly there would stay,  
But rather hang out of the way  
Than tarry for a trial.”

Coincidence, often strange, has little stranger than the fact that centuries after the dungeon at Lydford had earned such ill-fame, a greater prison, also of ill-repute, should be established within the parish, and that, when yet another century and more had passed, an Assize should be held there ; for in the reign of Edward I. the Assizes for the County of

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Devon were held alternately at Exeter and Lydford. But there was this difference between the Assize of April and May 1932 and the old Stannary Court : the three weeks' trial at Princetown was marked by scrupulous and meticulous care and regard for the English sense of justice and fair play, while in the far-off days of "Lydfor' Law," tradition has it that a Judge of the Stannary Court, having hung a felon in the forenoon, sat in judgment on him in the afternoon. Browne satirizes the incident :

"I oft have heard of Lydfor' Law,  
How in the morn they hang and draw  
And sit in judgment after.  
At first I wondered at it much ;  
But since I've found the matter such  
That it deserves no laughter."

It was in the main due to Mr. Thomas Tyrwhitt (later Sir Thomas) that Dartmoor was selected as the site of a Depot—as it was styled—for the accommodation of prisoners of war. Mr. Tyrwhitt, who came from an old North of England family, was Secretary to the Prince of Wales (subsequently Regent and George IV.) and his Council. In 1786 he was appointed Auditor of the Duchy of Cornwall, and in 1805 Lord Warden of the Stannaries of Devon and Cornwall, while from 1796 to 1802 he represented Okehampton in Parliament, and Plymouth from 1806 to 1812. He then became Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, and was knighted.

Mr. Tyrwhitt was a man who saw visions and dreamed dreams of transforming Dartmoor into a land of lush pastures, smiling wheatfields, swaying flaxlands, and productive gardens ; of the time when :

" . . . The wilderness  
No longer rock-strew'd, blossoms as a rose."

And he showed his confidence in their realization by

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building a house (Tor Royal) and outbuildings, and laying out a spacious farm. This task occupied three years (1785 to 1788), and Mr. Tyrwhitt did succeed in growing flax on his estate during an unusually dry summer, being awarded a medal by the Bath Agricultural Society for an exhibit at its show.

Down to the closing years of the eighteenth century the area in which Princetown is now situate was open moor, with a trackway leading from Two Bridges to Okery (the site of an ancient clapper bridge over the Blackabrook), and thence across Walkhampton Common. In place of the old trackway, Mr. Tyrwhitt laid down the present roads. He also inspired and stimulated the building and laying out of farms in other parts of the moor. His efforts were attended for a time with a fair measure of success, but ultimately in many cases Nature prevailed in the unequal struggle, and gradually the farms reverted to the moor, the only trace of them remaining to-day being the rapidly disappearing ruins of the buildings, and the fallen granite walls that enclosed fields now covered with gorse, bracken, and heather. An old Dartmoor curse runs, "If you scratch my back I will break your heart," and if Dartmoor did not break Sir Thomas's heart, it emptied his purse, for it is recorded that he lost a fortune on the moor and died a poor man.

One of his ambitions, however, did fructify. He aimed at founding a settlement on the moor and naming it Princetown, in compliment to his Royal master, the Regent, who was interested in his schemes. On one occasion the Regent visited Tor Royal, and the story is told that he was seized with a fancy for the belle of the moor, Dolly Copplestone. But Dolly had a lover of her own, one of the sturdy, independent Dartmoor type, and he promptly placed Dolly beyond the reach of the First Gentleman of Europe, for he rode off with her to Lydford Church, where he married

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her. And Dolly lived at Dartmeet ever after—at all events until she reached what is known on the moor as “a good old age.”

One of the first references to the possibility of a war prison being built that I have found is contained in an extract from the *Bristol Mirror* of July 13, 1805, which reads : “The Prince of Wales is about to erect, at his own expense, a chapel at Princetown in the forest of Dartmoor, under the direction of Thomas Tyrwhitt, Esq., Lord Warden of the Stannaries. Mr. Tyrwhitt has suggested to the Government the propriety of erecting a building near the above for the deposit of such prisoners of war as may be brought to Plymouth, who can without difficulty be conveyed up the river Tamar and landed within a few miles from the spot. It is said that this plan will be acted upon forthwith, and barracks built for the reception of a proportionate number of troops.”

A large number of French prisoners taken during the Napoleonic wars was then confined at Plymouth in six hulks moored in the Hamoaze (and maintained at an annual cost of £18,000), and in Mill Prison, the latter, years later, being known as Millbay Barracks, and used by troops. It was because of the congestion at Plymouth, and in other war prisons in various parts of the country, that the proposal was made that a permanent prison should be built. The assertion that prisoners could “without difficulty be conveyed up the river Tamar and landed within a few miles from the spot,” suggests that the writer had little topographical knowledge of the area, for the situation was such that there was no alternative to marching the prisoners from Plymouth to Princetown, a distance of sixteen or seventeen miles.

The forecast that the prison was to be built was, however, well informed, for an official of the Transport Board, which had control of the system for the care

PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF DARTMOOR PRISON

*From an original*





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and maintenance of sick and wounded seamen and prisoners of war, writing from Tor Royal on July 20, 1805, reported that he arrived there on the 18th instant and met Mr. Daniel Alexander, the architect, and that after together examining many places on Dartmoor for the purpose of building a prison for prisoners of war, they had fixed upon a place near Mr. Tyrwhitt's lodges, deeming it more eligible than any other.

In the following January there was another letter referring to a communication from Mr. Tyrwhitt, on behalf of the Prince of Wales, as to the grant of a lease of about 390 acres of land, "being the quantity marked out by the surveyor upon which a prison is to be built."

The foundation stone was laid on March 20, 1806, by Mr. Tyrwhitt, and the prison completed within about three years, though not until many difficulties had been met and overcome. The builders were Isbell, Rowe & Co., whose tender was £66,815, after the architect's original estimate of £86,000 had been cut to £70,000, and the area of the prison reduced from 23 acres to 15 acres, 2 roods. The building was of granite quarried on the moor. Inclement weather, bad roads, and the high price of timber due to the war were the main causes of the contractors' troubles and delays.

A description of the prison given in Risdon's *Survey of Devon*, published in 1811, when the building had only recently been completed, runs : "It is probably the finest of its kind. The outer wall encloses a circle of about 30 acres. Within this is another wall which encloses the area in which the prison stands ; this area is a smaller circle with a segment cut off. The prisons are five large rectangular buildings each capable of containing more than 1500 men ; they have each two floors, where is arranged a

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double tier of hammocks slung on cast-iron pillars ; and a third floor in the roof, which is used as a promenade in wet weather. There are besides two other spacious buildings ; one of which is a large hospital and the other is appropriated to the petty officers, who are judiciously separated from the men. In the area likewise are sheds or open buildings for recreation in bad weather. The space between the walls forms a fine military road (nearly a mile in length) round the whole, where the guard parades, and the sentinels, being posted on platforms overlooking the inner wall, have complete command of the prison without intermixing with the prisoners.

" The segment cut off from the inner circle contains the governor's house and the other buildings necessary for the civil establishment ; and into this part of the ground the country people are admitted, who resort to a daily market with vegetables and such other things as the prisoners purchase to add to the fare that is provided for them, and which they buy at lower rates than they could generally be procured for at the market towns. The barracks for the troops form a detached building, and are distant from the prison about a quarter of a mile.

" The number of prisoners that have been lodged here have been from five to seven thousand, and the troops employed to guard them not more than from 300 to 500."

The troops, drawn from a militia battalion, were commanded by regular officers, the battalion being changed every two months, and in 1813 the garrison was strengthened by the addition of companies of artillery.

In 1809-10, when the rate of mortality caused great concern, there was talk of the prison being closed, and reference to it is made in a paragraph in the *Plymouth and Dock Telegraph* of March 3, 1810 :

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"We understand that the removal of prisoners from Dartmoor (as stated to be in contemplation some time since) will not take place. Barracks are to be built on an improved plan on the north side of the prison, capable of containing 500 soldiers."

The first Agent—or governor, as he would be designated to-day—was Captain Isaac Cotgrave, appointed in October 1808, after having held a similar position at Plymouth. The first draft of 2500 prisoners was marched from Plymouth to the prison on May 24, 1809, and within a month the total had been increased to 5000. Many paragraphs in the *Plymouth and Dock Telegraph* record the arrival at intervals, of cartels of prisoners, and in one appearing in the issue for September 23, 1809, the description, "The Royal Prison at Dartmoor," is used in reporting the removal there of a number of French prisoners, escorted by a detachment of the Essex Regiment.

The only houses at Princetown at this early period in the prison's history were the inn, Plume of Feathers, still in existence, and a few cottages. When the Duchy Hotel was built it was used as officers' quarters.

The situation and accommodation of the prison were not calculated to appeal to the prisoners. "A Receptacle of Human Flesh," M. Catel styled it. A formidable and depressing "home from home" though it proved to be, still it was not quite the place of which the French author wrote: "For seven months in the year it (Dartmoor) is a *vraie Sibérie*, covered with unmelted snow. When the snows go away the mists appear. Imagine the tyranny of *perfide Albion* in sending human beings to such a place."

A Dartmoor covered with unmelted snow for seven months of the year is an amusing invention, and another picture was drawn by M. Jules Poulain, a Frenchman, who lived at Princetown in order to be

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near his friend, confined in prison, and who wrote in his book, *Dartmoor ; or, the Two Sisters* : “ Think of the ocean waves changed into granite during a tempestuous storm, and you will then form an idea of what Dartmoor is like.”

However, it proved better than the prison hulks at Plymouth, and it was remarkable how quickly the Frenchmen settled down and organized a community life not unlike that of a small town. They prided themselves that it was based on equality and fraternity, although class distinctions were maintained. The story is told in *La Prison de Dartmoor* (or the Historical Story of the Misfortunes and Escapes of French Prisoners in England under the Empire from 1809 to 1814), by L. Catel, who was himself held captive in the prison. The men were accommodated in six halls, and elected from among themselves a President of the whole, and a *Commissaire de Salle* for each hall. The *Commissaires* were responsible to the President, and the latter to the Agent, for the maintenance of good order.

The prisoners more or less separated themselves into six groups. At the top of the scale were *Les Lords*, men of wealth, or at all events, members of well-to-do families who could keep them supplied with money. At the bottom were *Les Romains*, who occupied the upper storey, or cockloft, originally intended for promenade in bad weather, and whose mode of life was revolting beyond words.

Between came *Les Laborieux*, the industrialists of the community, men who earned money by manufacturing with their fingers, and the crudest of tools, articles which they sold in the market established in the prison ; *Les Indifferents*, of the class who “ toil not, neither do they spin,” even to earn enough money to supplement the rations and clothes provided by

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the English Government ; *Les Minables*, inveterate gamblers, who lived only for cards, dice, and other games of chance ; and *Les Kaiserlics*, who, only one stage removed from *Les Romains*, were also gamesters and sold their clothes and food in order to secure the means with which to satisfy their passion. It has been asserted that *Les Kaiserlics* and *Les Romains* are identical, but the French historian differentiates between them, and distinctly assigns *Les Romains* to the sixth group.

The prison was victualled by contractors, who, when detected in dishonest dealings, as occasionally they were, had to face prosecution, and on conviction suffer the penalty of imprisonment. Generally the food was good though insufficient in quantity, and to supplement their rations prisoners made purchases from their own resources in the prison market (the site of which is now covered with flower-beds), to which, from surrounding farms, poultry, dairy produce, and vegetables were brought by women mounted on donkeys and driving, tandem fashion, other donkeys carrying panniers loaded with commodities. Hawkers from Plymouth brought fish, sugar, coffee, tobacco, clothing, the business done both by farm folk and townsmen being extensive.

Soup was an easy dish for the cooks, but it was not popular with the prisoners after a find made one day. Dinner had just begun when one man jumped up holding by the tail a rat which had been cooked whole ! " See what those rascally cooks have cooked for us," he cried.

Then one after another his comrades found in the soup a rat's head, a rat's leg, a rat's tail, or some other part of the repulsive rodent. But every one was hungry, and the majority dined off the soup, " though with great repugnance." Even M. Catel admits that he was of the number who did so.

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An explanation by the master cook was, however, demanded, and this is what, in effect, he said : " In the evening we filled the boilers with water, leaving them on the hearth ready to be placed on the fire as soon as we arrived in the morning. Whether by neglect or forgetfulness the covers were not placed back on the cauldrons—a thing which has never happened until to-day. Rats in numbers came in during the night in order to pick up crumbs and scraps of food which had dropped on the floor, and as they were not particularly in luck they attacked the cauldrons, and falling in, were drowned ! This morning we put in the meat for the soup, not then knowing the boilers had been left uncovered during the night. We are victims, too, having eaten some of the soup, although perhaps, more than 100 rats had been boiled in it ! "

The tale seemed to have appealed to the unfortunate prisoners, who, their anger appeased, did not carry out their intention to arrest the chief cook and deal with him as they thought fit.

The articles manufactured by *Les Laborieux* were disposed of in the market, either for money or for food and other things. Plaited straw bonnets, bracelets, and watchguards of hair, cleverly made articles in carved bone, and models in wood and bone were in constant demand. Prices obtained for these wares ranged from five francs to six hundred francs. One very fine piece of craftsmanship, a miniature ship only two inches in length and perfect in every detail, constructed, carved, and equipped with a rigging of hair by a soldier of St. Malo, was sold for 2500 francs. The craftsman had spent a year on his delicate and intricate work.

The prison dress consisted of suits of yellow kersey, striped shirts with the capital letters " TOTO " stamped across the back. *Les Lords* were spared the

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wearing of such hideous garb. They affected instead black broadcloth and frills and ruffles.

Side by side with the prison régime was a system of parole by which prisoners were quartered at private houses on condition that they gave their word of honour not to attempt to escape. They were restricted to a walk along the public road for a distance of a mile in either direction from their places of abode, and had to be indoors at sunset. General Rochambeau lived on parole at Ockery Bridge, and it is recorded of him that on receipt of a letter informing him that Napoleon would land in England at a certain date he appeared in full dress, booted and spurred, and wearing his orders, ready to welcome his hero when he came to Dartmoor. But Napoleon did not come, though Rochambeau was released in time to take part in the Hundred Days' Campaign and end his career at Waterloo.

Another of France's soldiers, Marshal Cambronne, was quartered in the house at Ashburton of Sergt. Eddy, and for long years a portrait of the marshal presented to Mrs. Eddy by himself hung in a room of the Golden Lion Hotel. A note in a report by the Prison Commissioners regarding the prisoners on parole at Tavistock records that their conduct was exemplary, but that "some of them have made overtures of marriage to women in the neighbourhood, which the magistrates have very properly taken pains to discourage." Other prisoners were on parole at Okehampton, Moretonhampstead, Bodmin, Launceston, Callington, Roscoe, and Regilliack.

Many of the favoured class broke their parole in attempts to reach the coast and escape to France. When arrested, they were tried and sentenced at Devon Assizes, or were taken to Dartmoor, where they were confined with others of various ranks in what was known as the Petty Officers' Prison (later

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the prison infirmary). They included officers of both the naval and merchant services.

How the treatment of prisoners in one country reacted against the unfortunate captives in another is illustrated in a paragraph in the *Plymouth and Dock Telegraph* of November 16, 1811, which records that "On Tuesday last an officers' guard belonging to the Somerset Militia proceeded to Launceston for the purpose of escorting all the French prisoners of the rank of midshipmen on parole at that place to the prison at Dartmoor. The number of prisoners so sent off amounted to 37. Their removal has been occasioned by the order of the French Government to imprison all midshipmen amongst the British prisoners of war in France."

There were escapes also from the prison. One man who was engaged in executing repairs in the doctor's house succeeded in insinuating himself into the good graces of the maid-servant. With her help he secured the doctor's naval uniform and was thus enabled to pass the guard on the high road. He reached the coast and France, and later returned, with many compliments, a snuff-box and silver-headed cane that he had borrowed !

Another man had himself walled up by his fellow-workmen in a house they were building and at nightfall pushed down the newly built wall and escaped ! The employment of prisoners on work of this kind was common. Two of the prisons, a row of houses for prison officers, the masonry of the church, and the parsonage house, were erected by French prisoners, who received a wage of 6d. per day. Another piece of work on which prisoners were employed was the raising of the outer wall (in 1812) from eight feet in height to twelve feet, the same as the inner wall, because of the number of escapes.

The use of English uniforms was a common

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means of facilitating escape, these being purchased from the Jews who attended the market from Plymouth. On one occasion Captain Shortland found a number of uniforms in possession of the prisoners and confiscated them ; assuring the owners, however, that when they returned to France the uniforms would be handed back to them, because, although possession was illegal as long as they were prisoners of war, they had become owners of the clothes by purchase !

One escape was effected through the Dramatic Society which produced plays for the entertainment of prisoners, and on occasion was patronized by officers of the garrison. One of the artistes wrote a comedy in three acts, *La Capitaine Calonne et sa Dame*. A certain officer of the garrison, the original of Calonne, and his wife, felt flattered by the honour of being the principal figures in the play. They were induced to attend the first performance and when, during the rehearsals, the question of costume was raised, they lent uniform and dress to the principals who were to impersonate them (Messieurs Sanbot and Routier).

Having appeared in the first act this couple, wearing their stage attire, left the improvised theatre, and walked arm in arm through the prison gateway, the turnkeys thinking they were the captain and his wife, and the guards saluting the officer. They were due to appear again in the third act, and when they did not respond to the call to take their cue, a search was made, but they could not be found.

Realizing that he had been duped, though the performers protested they knew nothing of the intentions of the vanished men, the captain, with his wife, essayed to leave the prison. But the turnkey was obdurate. Saying the couple had already left,

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he persisted in believing the captain and his wife were impostors, and it was not until the morning, when the Agent was appealed to, that they were released. Meanwhile Sanbot and Routier had reached Tavistock, and thence found their way to the coast, eventually gaining France.

One of the most intriguing stories of escape is that of three Frenchmen, and an American who had served in the French Navy, and in consequence was confined with the French prisoners. The four men are said to have worked for many months in constructing a tunnel through which eventually they got away. Nowhere other than in the French book on Dartmoor have I been able to find any account of the construction of an underground passage by Frenchmen. Though far different in detail, there is yet in the enterprise a general similarity to the work undertaken by the American prisoners, and ending in failure, which is suggestive. M. Catel, though not claiming personal experience of it—he was told about it by escaped prisoners—yet vouches for the genuineness of the story, which, at all events, is ingenious and not lacking in thrill.

The author devotes several chapters to a description of the operations of the four men. Here I gave only an outline of the tale. Being well supplied with funds, the men used their money to pay about a score of their poorly circumstanced fellow-prisoners for the exclusive use of that part of the prison that they all should have shared. This they partitioned off with heavy curtains and so secured seclusion in which to pursue their studies in mathematics. No outsider was permitted to enter, and, waiting until curiosity and suspicion regarding themselves had died down, they began the work of making an opening through the floor with tools of which they had possessed themselves. After great labour, they succeeded in

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cutting out slantwise a slab under the table, replacing it when they were not working.

Next they sank a shaft and began tunnelling. The soil excavated was taken out in a small sack at night and thrown into the drains—presumably the stream used by the Americans for the same purpose. It took them a month to reach a depth of 25 feet, two men working by day and two by night. On occasion, rock necessitated a diversion in line, but they steadily burrowed towards the boundary walls. In three months they had progressed about one hundred metres from the shaft, and not dismayed by many difficulties and the intense cold, they dug without ceasing the hole by which they hoped to evade the “watchfulness of the bulldogs who kept them penned like sheep.”

After five months they had an unexpected find. One of them struck what appeared to be a lump of decaying granite. Inserting his fingers in two cavities he worked the object loose and then found it was a human skull! He called his colleagues, and after they had recovered from their fright, they conjectured how the skull could have got in this place, “which was never habited before this frightful and murderous prison was built.”

Not reaching any satisfactory conclusion, they proceeded with their job and then made another sinister find—the skeleton to which the skull belonged. For the moment their ardour was damped, but later they resumed their work, and at the end of six months calculated that they were outside the walls and within ten metres from the surface. In the meantime, no suspicion had been aroused concerning them.

Next, two of the workers came up against a rough decaying wall, and though puzzled, attacked it. Within a few minutes they had pierced it to the width of the tunnel, and before them was a hollow space—a sort of cavern. Obtaining another light, they

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entered and were startled by the mummified form of a man, the face being well preserved, though of the ghastly paleness "which covers all those who pass from life to eternity." At the foot, still more terrible to them, leaned an athletic figure in full armour, and with one hand resting on a halberd and the other on a battleaxe. The two men summoned their comrades, and the four investigated further. One of them touched the halberd and immediately the figure crashed to the floor, proving to be nothing more than the armour of the mummified warrior, which had been fixed up when its owner was placed in his tomb.

M. Catel's ingenious, if unconvincing, explanation of the mystery of how a warrior came to be buried in such a wild place is, that after considerable research he found proof that at the time of the Roman invasion of England part of the conquering army encamped on the very spot where the prison stands. An epidemic broke out and caused sad ravages in the ranks. The dead, in considerable numbers, were thrown into a ditch and buried, the original skeleton found being one of the soldiers. A chieftain also died and was buried with his armour in the cavern into which the excavators had broken.

Having recovered from their shock, the prisoners found a flight of rough steps which led to the stone covering the opening of the cavern, and this they succeeded in moving, finding that it was embedded in heather. The way to freedom now lay open, but they waited until a heavy fog favoured their escape. This fell on November 27, 1810, and wearing uniforms of English naval officers, which they had succeeded in obtaining, the four prisoners left by the tunnel, replacing the stone covering the exit. By avoiding the road as far as possible, they eventually found their way to Plymouth, where they secured accommodation at a waterside hostelry. What might have proved

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the language difficulty was obviated by the presence of the American, William Grenwoth ; while Messieurs Garnier and Revel also spoke English well. The fourth man, M. Borel, knowing little or no English, was represented as having lost the power of speech through injury suffered in action.

To the inn came Lord Seymour, a young yachtsman and sportsman, whose sixty-ton sloop lay in the Sound. Between him and the pseudo-English naval officers a friendship developed, and a trip to Jersey with him was suggested. The invitation was eagerly accepted. There was much card-playing and drinking after the party had put to sea, and during the passage two of the Frenchmen took turn at the helm and manœuvred the yacht to St. Malo instead of Jersey. There, the erstwhile prisoners landed and told the story of their escape to the authorities. Because of the part he had unconsciously played in it, Lord Seymour was not treated as a prisoner of war as he would have been otherwise, and was permitted to go to Paris with two of the Frenchmen, who obtained audience of Napoleon, and related to him their story. Napoleon was much entertained, and acceded to the request that Lord Seymour should be permitted to return to England instead of being held prisoner and the sloop seized as a prize.

Before leaving Dartmoor, the Frenchmen had revealed the secret of the tunnel to a trustworthy compatriot in order that he and others might also escape. Two of them are said to have succeeded in doing so, but from that point knowledge of the tunnel was lost, and its existence remained undiscovered by the authorities.

An incident that occurred many years after the prison had been in use as a penal establishment has been associated with the escapes of prisoners of war. One day, when the garden party were digging the

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flower-beds, they unearthed several empty coffins, not one of which appeared ever to have contained a corpse. The authorities were puzzled for an explanation, and one suggestion offered was that the coffins had been used—possibly with the connivance of bribed prison officers—for carrying out live prisoners, who were subsequently released from the wooden shells and made their escape. An alternative and gruesome suggestion was that the coffins had been used for burials and later exhumed by body-snatchers, who carried the corpses down to the hospitals at Plymouth !

## CHAPTER III

### A LIVING TOMB : THE UNSPEAKABLE ROMANS

**F**ELLOWS in misfortune, yet the Frenchmen did not live in peace and amity. Quarrels were numerous and duels frequent, weapons of the crudest kinds being used. Many deaths resulted, and there were also suicides of men who had lost all hope, a sequel being a complaint by the Coroner for Plymouth that the inquests in a single year in the war prison had outnumbered the whole of the inquests he had held in the fourteen preceding years.

The severest form of punishment for breaches of regulations was imprisonment in the cachot, which, for the first year or two, was a small building of rough masonry—the blackest of black holes. Then another cachot was built of granite by prisoners, but even this provided only the rudest of shelters in bad weather. Some of the men sent to the cachot were virtually without clothes, and illness followed exposure, compelling their removal to hospital, where they died. A French lad, who made an unsuccessful attempt to escape, and was sent to the cachot, left on record this appeal :

“ O set me free.  
This dungeon deep  
Is darkening around me,  
I dare not sleep.  
Unearthly forms in its gloom I see :  
They are mocking my sorrow,  
O set me free.”

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With men herded together in thousands, and with only the primitive forms of sanitation of the period, it was inevitable that there should be much sickness, and in 1809 the mortality soared high. In the main this was due to an epidemic of a virulent form brought from the West Indies. Between November of 1809 and April of 1810 the number of deaths was nearly 500, of a total prison population of 5000, and it is recorded by a French prisoner that, during the height of the epidemic, the medical officer (Dr. Dykar) had coffins stored in the infirmary within sight of the patients. A return called for and presented to Parliament shows that in 1809 the deaths numbered 149; in 1810, 419; and in 1811, 54; while later returns record that from May 1, 1809 to January 1816, the total deaths in the prison were 1478, including 280 Americans.

In contrast with the reverence and care with which the fallen in the Great War—even those who died captive in enemy lands—were laid to rest, the callousness shown towards the men who died at Princetown is unbelievable. They were buried without funeral rites in graves dug in the field, part of which is now the site of the gasworks. There they lay neglected and unhonoured, not merely by British, but also by American and French authorities. It seemed never to have occurred to the first-named that the burial-ground of men who gave their lives in their country's cause, equally with those who had fallen in battle, should be a God's Acre and not a cattle run. Possibly the omission by the American and French Governments to induce the British Government to concede to the dead this right was due to ignorance of the conditions that existed.

At all events, for nearly fifty years the bodies lay unhonoured in the field, and it is recorded by Miss Rachel Evans that, when she visited it in 1845, she

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found that horses and cattle had broken up the soil and left the bones of the dead to whiten in the sun. Twenty years later the piggery within the prison walls was abolished, and the pigs were allowed to run loose in the field—where, by the way, the piggery stands to-day—and the animals began to root up coffin lids and parts of the coffins, as well as bones.

Then, at long last, decent steps were taken to remedy past neglect. The Governor, Captain Stopford, collected and exhumed as many bones as could be found, divided them into two heaps, and removed them to two cemeteries adjoining the prison, which he had planted and fenced. One he named the American cemetery and the other the French cemetery. Here he buried the bones and erected two granite obelisks, each recording that it is in memory of the American (or French) prisoners of war who died between the years 1809 and 1814, and bearing also the motto, “Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.”

The entrance to the American cemetery now lies through a granite archway—a replica, on a much smaller scale, of the main entrance to the prison. On the top, instead of the familiar “Parcere subjectis,” is a bronze tablet inscribed, “To the glory of God, and in loving memory of 218 American sailors and soldiers of the war of 1812 who died here, this memorial gateway is erected by the National Society of the United States Daughters of 1812, 30th May 1928.”

From time to time there was much criticism of the mortality in the prison. The question, raised by the French Government, was also discussed in the Press of this country. Epidemics of contagious and infectious diseases were frequent, as was inevitable where men were herded together under conditions that would not conform to present-day ideas of sanitation and hygiene. But there were periods when

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the mortality fell as low as 17 per thousand, including deaths from duels, suicides, accidents, and starvation. (The last-named class will be explained presently.) It was asserted that the mortality at Dartmoor in the worst year (1810) was less than in the prison hulks, where it was 30 per thousand, and less than the average of deaths in all the war prisons of the country. Further, it was claimed that the official returns showed that the mortality among prisoners was less, in proportion, than in any town in England, with equal population.

Turning over the files of the *Plymouth and Dock Telegraph* of this period, I came across a paragraph in the issue of April 28, 1810, containing the assurance that "All's well," in spite of what had been said to the contrary. "Reports having been in circulation respecting the unhealthy situation of Dartmoor Prison and the great mortality among the prisoners at the Depot," it ran, "we are assured by the Agent connected with the establishment that it is one of the most healthy in the Kingdom, for out of 5356 prisoners there are but 86 in hospital, 64 of whom are convalescents, and only four on low diet."

Sir George McGrath, writing on this subject, said: "During my service there malignant measles and smallpox were imported from other contaminated sources. These diseases attained to great virulence among Americans, chiefly arising from habits of indulgence from the ample pecuniary resources they possessed, and the facilities of obtaining spirits and sumptuous articles of diet from the market people, which no vigilance on the part of the authorities could suppress or obviate. The latter disease degenerated into an exasperated species of peri-pneumonia accompanied by low typhoid symptoms, which became very unmanageable and destructive. Independently of these contagious epidemics (for they became so), the

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Depot may be said to have been surprisingly healthy.

"I possess no register of the conditions of health or disease obtaining in other war prisons, so as to enable me to draw an accurate parallel, but Dartmoor was generally considered equal, if not superior, to any depot where the same numbers of men were confined in so narrow a compass ; but it must be borne in mind that after the closing of Mill Bay Prison Dartmoor received men from the Colonies, long shut up in transports, and often landed with the seeds of infection generated among them, and predisposed, by privation and vitiated atmosphere, to disease, while none were sent to the prisons in the interior but men, selected on purpose, in perfect health.

"The capacity of accommodation at Dartmoor was on a very extensive scale, and far beyond any other prison ; a greater number of men was consequently congregated there than elsewhere, which proportionately diminished its means of health, as it was calculated to contain 9000. Nor should it be forgotten that a state of confinement invokes moral and physical impressions deleterious to mental as well as bodily health."

Sir George, who was an inspector of Her Majesty's Fleets and Hospitals, and who is described on a memorial in St. Andrew's Church, Plymouth, as "a follower of the Immortal Nelson, his patron and friend," had great experience at Plymouth before transferring to Princetown, where the Americans came under his special care. He was regarded as their friend, and a testimonial was presented to him by prisoners, and transmitted to the President of the United States, recording their high regard for him, and the high sense they entertained of his humane exertions and well-directed skill in alleviating, as far

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as possible, the sufferings and maladies to which they were exposed in their place of imprisonment.

The most extraordinary phase of the story of the French prisoners at Dartmoor is that of the Romans. Abandoned gamblers, they staked and lost not only their money and general belongings, but also their clothing, bedding, and food, and they literally herded together in the cocklofts of the various prisons. They styled their domain the *Capitole*, and from this they derived and appropriated to themselves the name of *Les Romains*. “They were as naked as worms,” was a description applied to them, and in order to obtain admission to the society they had to conform to these rules :

- (1) Not to possess any kind of clothes.
- (2) To consent to the sale of one’s hammock, the proceeds to be used for the purchase of tobacco for the consumption of members of the society.
- (3) To use only a covering pierced in the middle for the head—the common property of the society—when a member was obliged to leave the *Capitole*.

The Romans elected a *Commissaire*, or “General,” as their chief, and obeyed him in all things. The numbers of this brotherhood grew until they exceeded 500. In compliance with the rules, each man, before he was admitted, sold every remaining garment he may have possessed. The “covering” stipulated in rule three consisted of a few old blankets, each with a hole in the middle through which the wearer thrust his head, so securing a robe of a disreputable kind to cover his nakedness when he went into the yard.

In the cocklofts every one was naked day and night, sleeping also uncovered on the stone floors. The only hammock was slung in the middle of the cockloft and occupied by the *Commissaire*, who issued his commands with the authority of a ruling potentate. At his order the men paraded when the hour for sleep

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arrived, and then, packed as closely as sardines in a tin, lay down, also at word of command, on their right sides. At intervals during the night the *Commissaire* called the men to attention and then gave them the order to turn over, each turn being made with something like military precision. The procedure savours of the story of the father and seven children who occupied one bed. "When father said 'turn,' they all turned." But imagine scores of naked men performing the same evolution on a stone floor. Generally, the Romans were exempt from the daily enumeration of prisoners, for although the janitors mounted to the *Capitole*, they did not trouble to count them.

M. Catel does not palliate the lives of these men, but expresses his disgust and shame. Corroboration of the faithfulness of his description of their habits is supplied by Charles Andrews, the American writer, who says many of them were in a state of perfect nudity, and had been so for many years. They had slept on the bare floors without covering till their flesh had acquired a sort of hardness like the stones themselves.

"It is difficult for the mind to conceive how human beings can be possessed of fewer virtues and more vices," he continues, "or how they can further change their common nature to a bestial one without the assistance of the Supreme Being. It is a remarkable fact that these men (if they yet deserve the name) were more healthy, though stark naked for ten (? six) years, winter and summer, than any prisoners at this depot ; though to the number of 9000."

During the day the Romans, wearing their holed blankets, haunted the garbage heaps for such scraps as they could find to appease their hunger, for their regular rations were exchanged for tobacco. It is said they rushed for scraps after the manner of dogs.

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When the bakery was burnt down in the autumn of 1812, and bread was supplied by an outside contractor, the governor reduced the ration per man from 1½ lb. to 1 lb. The prisoners struck against this, and, as a disciplinary measure, all supplies of food were withheld for twenty-four hours. When the cart drawn by two horses paid its usual daily visit for the removal of the offal, a number of Romans were haunting the heap searching for scraps, and, it is said, exasperated by the withholding of food, and famishing from hunger, they threw themselves on the horses, hacked them with knives, and dragged the carcases to the *Capitole*, where they ate raw the bleeding, still palpitating flesh.

Equally revolting is the story of the hunt of a rat, the animal being caught alive by a Roman, who literally tore it to pieces with his teeth, and, with another man sharing the feast, ate it. This happened during a procession in state of the "General" to No. 6 Prison. The description of "His excellency's" uniform provides amusing reading. His hat, coat, trousers, and waistcoat were resplendent with what appeared, from a distance, to be embroidered gold lace, but which was really skilfully plaited straw. Borne in front of him was a sabre of glittering tin, the hilt being decorated with a superb dragon! He was accompanied by bandsmen blowing trumpets and flageolets and beating iron kettles, and the whole force of Romans, naked except for rags tied around their loins.

When the hunt began the rat took refuge in the kitchen, where, after the quarry had been caught, the mob raided the tables, stealing and eating every morsel of food on which they could lay hands. The guard was summoned but found themselves outnumbered and overpowered by the Romans, who compelled them to lay down their arms, then marching

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them to the entrance, while jubilantly filling the air with cries of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" By this time Captain Cotgrave had brought in strong reinforcements from the garrison, and the "General," by a combination of audacity and theatricality tried to persuade the Agent that they had been engaged only in a harmless little joke, and were making their way to his residence to hand over to his care their prisoners and their arms!

"It is just a little joke with your soldiers, who are as docile as sheep," he said, "and we ask you to order the issue of double rations to us as a reward for our gallantry, and also to repair the breach we have made in the tables of our honourable hosts."

Captain Cotgrave had difficulty in concealing his amusement, but that did not prevent him from sending the "General" to the cachot for eight days, while his army was buffeted and driven back to their dens.

At intervals some of the Romans received money from their families at home, whereupon they would buy clothes and leave the *Capitole* for a few days—until, in fact, they had lost the whole of their money and clothes at cards or dice. Then they returned to resume their bestial life. As a class they engaged in pillage, theft, acts of violence, and other forms of vice. They were dirty and repulsive in their habits, and literally swarming with vermin.

All efforts to reform them were in vain. Captured and scrubbed, and provided with clothes, they reverted as soon as they were released, and within twenty-four hours had sold their clothes and were as naked and filthy as ever. So objectionable did they become to the other prisoners that in 1812 they were banished to No. 4 Prison, which was walled off from the other prisons. But even that did not prevent them from selling, through the bars of the gate, the new clothes and hammocks with which they had been supplied.

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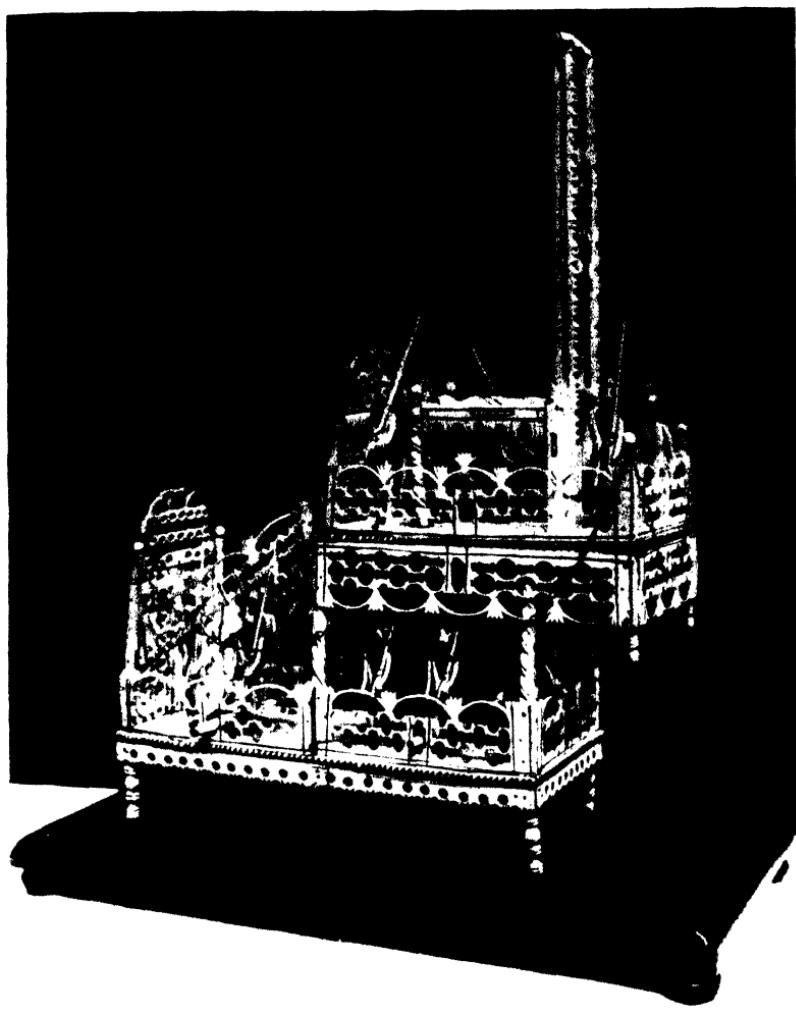
In spite of the rigours of Dartmoor they preferred to go naked ! In the *Capitole* they sang songs of a warlike character, the refrains being sung in unison.

Many of the Romans were young men of distinguished family, and M. Catel records how, in 1829, he met a curé, renowned for his piety and charity, who admitted having been a Roman at Dartmoor, and in 1846 an eminent administrator in Paris who also owned to having been one of the amazing company.

Gambling was the root of all evil in the prison, and to provide means to satisfy the gambler's appetite there was a regular traffic in rations, even though it meant physical hunger for the trifler with the Goddess Luck. Some of the prisoners set up shops in which they bought rations from the gamblers and sold them again at a profit to men who had money to spend.

The evil of the system is seen in the reply of Captain Cotgrave to the protests of some of the traffickers in food whom he sent to the cachot for ten days on two-thirds of their usual allowances.

"To the prisoners in the cachot for purchasing provisions," he wrote. "The orders to put you on short allowance from the Commissioners of His Majesty's Transport Board is for purchasing the provisions of your fellow-prisoners, by which means numbers have died for want of food, and the hospital is filled with sick not likely to recover. The number of deaths occasioned by this inhuman practice occasions considerable expense to the Government, not only in coffins, but the hospital filled with those poor, unhappy wretches so far reduced from want of food that they linger a considerable time in the hospital at the Government's expense, and then fall a victim to the cruelty of those who have purchased their provisions, to the disgrace of Christians and whatever nation they belong to. The testimony of



*Photo: C. H. Gill, Plymouth*

MODEL OF THE GUILLOTINE CONSTRUCTED AND CARVED FROM BEEF BONES AT DARTMOOR PRISON BY FRENCH PRISONERS OF WAR, 1809-1815

*(Photographed and reproduced by permission of the Plymouth Museum Committee)*



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your countrymen and the surgeons prove the fact."

Later, the Agent made an appeal to the well-conducted prisoners to put a stop to "the infamous and horrible practice of a certain number of prisoners who buy the provisions of some evil-conducted and unfortunate of their fellow-countrymen," and gave a general warning that if it were persisted in he would stop both the keeping of shops and the market.

In the case of the Romans, warning and appeal alike fell on deaf ears. They continued in their evil courses. To prevent gambling altogether was impossible, when a wager could be decided by pulling straws from a mattress, by the number of turns a sentry made in a given time, or even by the curls in the doctor's wig. The French prisoners are credited with a peculiarly ingenious device. When the lights were extinguished and a ship's lantern alone cast a dull glimmer through the room, the rats came out of their holes to pick up crumbs from the floor. A peculiarly tempting morsel was put in an open space, and each man selected a champion, for all the rats were known by name. When they crowded in the open to share the spoil a disinterested spectator would whistle, and the first rat to reach his hole was declared the winner. One particularly old grey rat went by the name of Père Ratapon.

The end of the Romans, however, was coming. So great did the scandal of their life become, that in June 1813 an inquiry was held by General Stephenson and Mr. Hawker, of Plymouth, whose principal recommendation was "that the prisoners calling themselves Romans should be removed and compelled to live like human beings in some place where they could be kept under strict surveillance."

In consequence, on October 16, 1813, 436 Romans were decently clothed and marched under a strong

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escort to a prison hulk at Plymouth, where they were kept under strict discipline until peace was declared.

Only a comparatively short time was to elapse before the fall of Napoleon ; and on April 20, 1814, the first draft of 500 French prisoners was marched to Plymouth to be shipped to France. On the 25th, a thousand more bade farewell to their place of confinement, and further drafts left at intervals until June 20, when the last of the many thousands were dispatched to Plymouth and France, the prison being left in the sole occupation of the Americans, of whom about a score succeeded in slipping out and escaping with the French drafts as they left.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHEN THE AMERICANS CAME

FOLLOWING the declaration of war in 1812 by United States on Great Britain, as the culmination of differences over the right of search and impressment, and the consequent hostilities on the high seas, numbers of American prisoners were added to the army of French captives then in various parts of the country. In April of 1813 the number of Americans had reached 1700, of whom 700 were confined in the two old battleships, *Meteor* and *La Brave*, in the Hamoaze at Plymouth. In considering the lot of these men one has to bear in mind that, as family quarrels are usually more bitter than differences between other people, so the close relationship of Britons and Americans exacerbated feeling between them in the unfortunate trouble in which they were involved.

That, however, does not seem a legitimate reason for the extraordinary fear of the American prisoners shown by the authorities. After all, the total was small, and, in the expressive phrase of the present day, to be "windy" over the possibility of a rising suggests ineptitude. At all events, nervousness was the governing factor in the decision to remove the Americans from Plymouth to Dartmoor, and on April 2, 1813—roughly a year before the first batch of French prisoners left the prison—250, under a military guard of equal strength, were marched along

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the snow-covered road to Princetown ; and near the end of May another 250 joined them.

The story of the Americans' incarceration at Dartmoor was told subsequently by writers who shared in it. Charles Andrews, author of *The Prisoner's Memoirs ; or, Dartmoor Prison* (published in New York), was captive in England throughout the war, and was with his fellow-countrymen from the time they were transferred from Plymouth to Dartmoor until their release. He wrote bitterly, and was especially vitriolic when dealing with Captain Shortland. But so were the Americans generally, and, taken on the whole, when the hardships and indignities they had to undergo are considered, I do not think that Andrews' record can be dismissed as an untrustworthy distortion.

In the opening pages of the book is included a certificate signed by sixty fellow-prisoners (many of them officers) who were captive during the greater part of the war. It runs : " Having perused the MS. journal kept by Charles Andrews, we do solemnly declare that all matters and occurrences herein contained are just and true to the best of our knowledge and belief, and that this is the only journal kept at Dartmoor."

*A Journal of a Young Man of Massachusetts*, published at Boston in 1816, was written by the surgeon in an American privateer captured by the British in May 1813. The doctor was confined first at Melville Island, Halifax, then in a prison ship in the Medway, and finally at Dartmoor. He did not arrive at Princetown until October 11, 1814, and being released in April 1815, had only six months' experience of it. In some respects he was as bitter as Andrews, but he was also a sentimentalist and moralizer, while he had a vein of humour. Note, too, his touch of satire. " We take two or three London

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newspapers," he writes (while still in the Medway), "and through them know a little of what is going forward in the world. We find by them that Johanna Southcote and Moleneaux, the black bruiser, engross the attention of the most respectable portion of John Bull's family."

Another historian of the American occupation of Dartmoor is one who signs himself "The Greenhorn." He also served in a privateer, but had been only three weeks at sea when his brig was captured by three frigates, the crew being landed at Plymouth after the Treaty of Ghent had been signed, though not ratified. "The Greenhorn" reached Dartmoor on January 30, 1815, less than three months before the first batch of Americans left the prison for home, and little more than five months before his own release on July 5, 1815. He, too, was a humorist, and saw the lighter side of prison life.

Much the same story, though in varying form, is told by each author, and the reader is given a vivid picture of life in the prison. At the outset the plight of the Americans was deplorable. They had no money, and consequently were unable to procure the necessaries, much less the luxuries, provident Frenchmen were able to buy. They were depressed and bitter, and their resentment of their treatment was increased by a decision of almost incredible stupidity, that they should take up their quarters in No. 4 Prison with the unspeakable Romans. The same fear of a rising and bloodshed which caused their transfer from Plymouth to Dartmoor operated in this decision. Both parties resented the arrangement. While the Americans objected to being housed with such horribly filthy and bestial men as the Romans, the latter were hostile because of what they considered an intrusion into their special lair.

Bitter complaints were made by the Americans

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to Mr. Reuben G. Beasley, the American Agent in London, for some time, without apparent effect. The reactions were of varied nature, of which rebellion against the authorities and the feud between the Americans and the Romans were the most persistent.

The first clash was comic, rather than serious, and fortunately did not result in violence. The Americans determined to celebrate Independence Day by flying the Stars and Stripes from each end of their prison hall, and on the morning of July 4 the two banners floated defiantly in the breeze. Captain Cotgrove, a disciplinarian without the saving grace of humour, determined that this defiance of authority could not be tolerated, and gave orders that the offending flags be removed forthwith. The Americans ignored the order, and the guard was marched into the yard to haul down the Stars and Stripes. There was a struggle for possession in which honours were easy, for while the guard captured and bore off one flag, for the rest of the day authority was chagrined by the sight of the other emblem of American nationality and independence still flying over a British prison.

Of more serious nature was an attack on the Americans by the Romans. Waiting in the yard one morning, the Frenchmen opened the battle with stones and sticks as soon as the Americans, unconscious of what was to befall them, emerged for exercise and diversion, of which they got both, though in an unwelcome form. The Americans were at a disadvantage, because they were without weapons, but fought with their fists in a style that accorded with the best traditions of the Anglo-American race. The guard was rushed in, and after a struggle restored order, but not until forty prisoners had been injured.

Eventually Mr. Beasley paid a visit to the prison, a little amelioration of his countrymen's conditions

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being the result. At the time he gave them only cold comfort, for, having listened to their grievances, he told the prisoners frankly that he had no funds, that the exchange of prisoners had been stopped for a year, and that they must not expect any material improvement in their state. Naturally, this caused great disappointment and resentment, which the men vented by giving the authorities the greatest possible trouble. They were continually planning to escape and engaging in actual attempts to break their prison bonds.

They complained bitterly of the distinction made between them and the French prisoners, the latter being allowed many privileges and advantages denied to the former. So strong did the resentment become that the Americans announced their unanimous determination to offer their services *en masse* to the British Government, and a considerable number did enlist in the British Navy, as a protest against what they conceived to be the neglect of their own Government in not insisting on conditions being improved.

But Mr. Beasley was at work, and the result was contained in the first letter ever received by the prisoners from him. "Fellow citizens," he wrote, "I am authorized by the Government of the United States to allow you one penny-halfpenny per day for the purpose of procuring you tobacco and soap, which will commence being paid from the first day of last January. And I earnestly hope it will tend towards a great relief in your present circumstances."

Later the men received another penny a day with which to buy tea and coffee, and these concessions, niggardly as they appear to-day, made life a little more bearable to the prisoners.

Captain Cotgrave resigned his position as Agent in December 1813, and was succeeded by Captain Thomas Shortland, who, though also a disciplinarian,

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did not omit the human touch in his administration. When the French prisoners were released on the conclusion of peace, No. 4 Prison was set apart for the negroes, and so for the first time the coloured man was more or less segregated, though the colour problem had not presented itself with the acuteness of later years. The negroes were ruled over by a giant of their own race, Big Dick. Perhaps his stature—he was 6 ft. 7 in. tall—accounted for the extraordinary command he had over his community.

“This Black Hercules commands respect, and his subjects tremble in his presence,” we are told by the Young Man from Massachusetts. “He goes the rounds every day and visits every berth to see that they are kept clean. When he goes the rounds, he puts on a large bearskin cap and carries in his hand a huge club. If any of his men are dirty, drunken, or grossly negligent he threatens them with a beating, and if they are saucy they are sure to receive one. They have several times conspired against him and attempted to dethrone him ; but he always conquered the rebels. One night several attacked him while he was asleep in his hammock. He sprang up and seized the smallest of them by his feet and thumped another with him. The poor negro who had thus been made a beetle of was carried next day to the hospital, sadly bruised and profoundly laughed at.”

Big Dick ran a boxing school, and his kingdom of No. 4 was noted for fencing, dancing, music. There was a theatre in which Shakespeare was performed, and the negro impersonations of Othello and Desdemona were highly diverting. Variety turns, as they are known to-day, included lightning sketches with chalk and charcoal and sleight-of-hand tricks. Every mode of gambling was rife, yet on Sundays this gaming hell and den of thieves was turned into a temple of worship.

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Then Big Dick's chaplain, Simon (a black man), mounted a little stool behind a table covered with a green cloth, enlarged on the wonders of creation, and propounded the gospel of the salvation of the souls of true believers, and hell fire and brimstone for the impenitent sinner. He was assisted by Deacon John (another negro), and the pair had a little difference as to the efficacy of read and extempore prayer. Deacon John had once been in the service of the Duke of Kent, and on that account assumed a comic state of dignity and authority. At the Royal Duke's he had learnt that it was proper to read prayers from the printed Word, but Priest Simon argued that he would make few converts if he read his prayers, which must, he was convinced, spring warm from the heart.

In consequence of this, there was a diversity of opinion in the Black Church, and Big Dick, finding this might endanger the peace of the Church and diminish his own influence, advised that the dispute should be left to the decision of a neighbouring Methodist preacher who sometimes visited the prison in a labour of love. The minister heard both sides of the argument and decided in favour of Simon, and although still unconvinced Deacon John ultimately acquiesced, as a matter of policy.

Simon claimed acquaintance and intercourse with the Angel Gabriel, from whom he had many revelations, which he described in his church. On one occasion he told the story, with all the vividness and colour of negro imagination, of the coming of the angel. "I saw a great light shine through the crevice of one window before the hour of daybreak," he said. "I looked up and saw something like a man with wings. I was at first frightened and cried out, 'Who comes dare?' for I could not see his face. Directly, the bars of the window opened each way and his head and shoulders came in, when I knew him to be the

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Angel Gabriel. ‘Simon,’ said he, ‘I am come to tell you that this prison will be sunk before forty days because its inhabitants are so wicked.’ Den I tank him, and he drew back his head again, and the iron bars were restored to their place again, when he spread out his wings, which were covered with ten thousand stars, which made a great light when he flew away.”

Simon’s sermon had the desired effect. It solemnized the negroes, and it is recorded that they became more liberal in their contributions, and so enabled Simon to purchase a new green coat !

One change introduced by Captain Shortland was the throwing open of the prison market to the Americans, a privilege hitherto denied them as a body. They had had to be content to delegate the task of buying to a small number of their elected representatives. The Americans were also allowed to visit the French prisoners during the later stages of the Frenchmen’s stay. This stirred the spirit of emulation in the Americans, who set about organizing their social life on lines similar to those the French had worked so successfully. Some of them opened up as shopkeepers for the sale of tobacco, boots, clothes, and other things permitted under the regulations. On the educational and amusement side there was a school of music, dancing classes, a glee club, a theatre, and a boxing academy.

Industry found an outlet in various ways, though limited by the supply of material and tools. Like the French, some of the Americans were exceptionally clever in the carving of wood and bone. Fully equipped miniature three-decker ships, constructed of beef bones, and delicately carved articles, perhaps more ornamental than serviceable, were produced, and these were sold (or exchanged for other goods)

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to traders in the market, or shopkeepers. Even coining was carried on by expert coiners, lead being surreptitiously stripped from the roof of the prison for the purpose, and hardened with an alloy improvised by the coiners. The story is told that even prison officers were deceived by the coiners, who, on one occasion, working under their eyes, offered to sell them coin, the product of their illicit skill and industry. Notes on the Bank of England to the value of many thousands of pounds were forged, and it is said that so perfect was the imitation that bank cashiers could not detect the forgery.

A considerable number of prisoners were employed by Captain Shortland in useful occupations : carpenters and masons in the building of the church, labourers in repairing the roads ; painters, blacksmiths, coopers, lamplighters in their various avocations ; nurses in the hospital, and so on. There was no guard for these men, and if any attempted to escape they were not further employed. It was rarely, however, that escape was essayed, for Captain Shortland introduced an ingenious, if cynical, plan for preventing it. Each workman received a wage of 6d. per day, paid every three months, and, if any prisoner escaped, the whole of all the workmen's pay was forfeited. Each prisoner was thus induced to be watchful of the movements of his fellow, and the guard so constituted was more effectual than if it had been armed !

Each prison, except No. 4, was managed by a committee of twelve elected by the prisoners themselves. Bye-laws were framed by the committees for the regulation of cleanliness or individual rights, and put to the vote by a crier. If there was a majority of " ayes " the bye-laws were given legal sanction, and the whole of the prisoners had to conform to them under penalty. Breaches of the law were dealt with

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by the committees, and the offenders had no appeal from their decision.

Like the French, whose social life had been marred by the Romans, the Americans also had a flock of exceptionally black sheep, who, though not so depraved in habits as the Romans, yet were both criminal and violent. They were not an organized body as the Romans had been, but men who, for one offence or another, had become social outcasts, or who, temperamentally inclined to a rough or criminal life, drifted into this class.

The author of *A Journal of a Young Man* states that they called themselves "The Rough Allies." "The Greenhorn" styles them "Rough Alleys." One does not know whether the latter was an early form of the present-day phrase, "a rough house," but whatever their name, these men arrogated to themselves the office of accuser, judge, and executioner. "In my opinion, they are as great villains as could be collected in the United States," wrote the Young Man from Massachusetts. "They appear to have little principle and as little humanity, and many of them are given to every vice. I am wearied out with such lawless conduct.

"The Rough Allies organized themselves into a company of plunderers. I have seen men run from their sleeping berths, in which they spend nearly their whole time, and plunder the little shopkeepers, and carry the articles they have plundered and secret them in their beds. These gangs or mobs of robbers were a scandal to the American character, and strongly reprobated by every man of honour in the prisons. Some of these little merchants found themselves stripped of all they possessed in a few minutes."

Two of the most notorious of the Rough Allies were nicknamed Sodom and Gomorrah, and an amusing story is told by "The Greenhorn," of how

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this pair was punished for robbing a Jewish trader of his watch. After trial by the committee they were sentenced to chastisement by the market women. With their hands tied, they were handed over to the women, who, in addition to punishing them for the specific offence of stealing the watch, paid off old scores of their own, for the thieving of Sodom and Gomorrah did not stop even at the market commodities offered for sale by women. Led by a veritable giantess of the moor, who in turn seized and stripped the villains, the women flogged them with riding-whips, shoes, or any weapon that came to hand, the leader laying on even with a goose which she swung by the neck and brought down on the offenders' backs with resounding thwacks.

The gambling fever was no less intense among the Americans than it had been among the French, and at this stage there was no lack of money. Among the prisoners were a number of men who had served in the British Navy. Having refused to fight against their own countrymen, they had been sent to Dartmoor. They had earned a great deal of prize money, which they received from time to time. Two thousand five hundred of this class were confined in the prison, and generally the whole of their money was lost in gambling. It is asserted by American writers that large numbers of them were impressed into the British service by English ships and English press-gangs. At all events, the men had the means to indulge their gaming instincts. One man is said to have received £100 on a Monday and on the following Thursday, ere the gambling fever had run its course in him, he had not the price of a cup of coffee in his possession. The United States Government allowances of 2½d. a day amounted to £2000 a month, and the bulk was gambled away by the recipients.

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"Gambling was the wide inlet of vice and disorder, and in this the Frenchmen took the lead," writes the Young Man of Massachusetts. "These men would play away everything they possessed beyond the clothes to keep them decent. They had been known to game away a month's provisions, and when they had lost it, would shirk and steal for a month after for their subsistence."

## CHAPTER V

### COME AND SEE THIS CHICAMAREE

“ **T**HE GREENHORN ” leaves a wonderfully vivid description of day-to-day life in the prison. He depicts the model-makers at work on beef bones obtained from the cookhouse, sawing, scraping, and polishing them, and then constructing miniature three-deckers ; and pictures little bodies of men who have banded themselves together to produce goods for sale at a profit, or established themselves in business as shopkeepers. He makes Davies, popular with his fellow-prisoners as crier in extemporized rhyme, almost live. Listen to the old man crying a prize fight :

“ Know ye all, short and tall, great and small,  
That Bob Starr and Shott Morgan  
Are to settle the difference that is between them  
To-morrow morning at half-past nine o’clock  
At the Ball Alley, the usual place for these affairs ;  
And as Bob is a rare one,  
And Shott a dare one,  
Great sport is expected.  
So now come and see—this chicamaree—  
And know it is me,  
Old Davis, afflicted, who is crying this notice ;  
Although a little rounded in the shoulders,  
Yet he’s a r-r-r-ready old dog ! ”

And off he goes, sounding his bosun’s whistle and crying his tale at the next corner, his recompense for services so racily rendered being one penny !

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Here comes Frank Dolphin, the clothes pedlar, with a pyramid of hats balanced on his head, and a stock of second-hand garments, numerous enough to fill an old clothes dealer's shop, hanging from every part of his body. He also sings in rhyme the quality of his goods. He applies to every garment a racy history : every hole was made by a bullet fired in some notable action, and he twirls a hat on the end of his cane as he cries :

" Try a cap that was worn at the Battle of the Nile, that had its nap carried away by the enemy's shot, leaving it in the threadbare state you see. Had I the impudence of some in the trade I might say that this hat had a charm against danger, but I scorn to say what I have not the authority to prove."

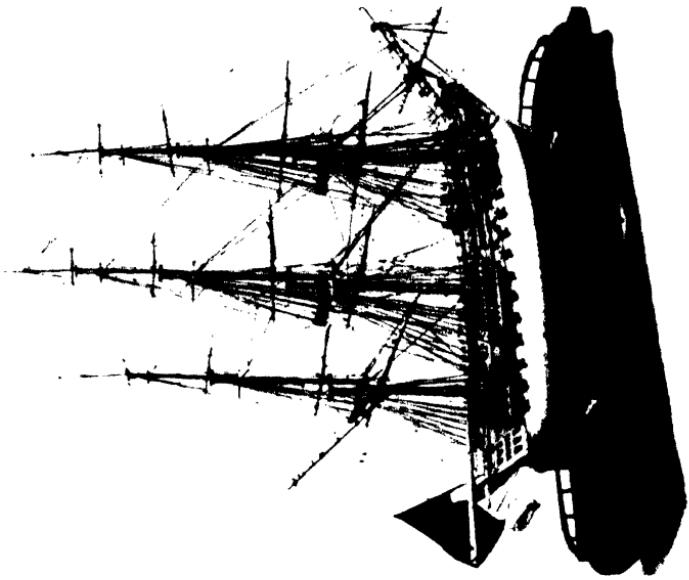
Frank gives place to a man balancing a tray and bawling, " Hot plum-gudgeons. Who'll buy nice hot plum-gudgeons for a penny a-piece—just smoking from the frying-pan—O-ho, my brown plum-gudgeons, crisping nice and smoking hot."

Plum-gudgeons are cakes of mashed potatoes flavoured with cod, and fried to an appetizing brown.

Next comes a negro boasting that he sells the best fritters in the prison—twice the size of any others.

" F-r-r-ritters lighter dan de punge, bigger dan a nobody's," he cries. " De pan so clean what fry 'um a man can shabe heself in, or see he party face dout tearing it to tatters ; tur-r-r-it, fr-r-r-r-rit—fr-r-r-ritters."

Sambo's tongue must be on a spring to enable him to do the trills. In the next yard is seen a table laden with roast sucking-pig, geese, ducks, fish with sauces. Sirloin and rounds of beef are roasting in the oven. The proprietor runs an extraordinarily profitable business, and is piling up dollars against the time when peace is proclaimed and he returns to the land



MODEL OF A FRIGATE MADE AT DARTMOOR PRISON BY FRENCH PRISONERS OF WAR, 1809-1815.  
FROM BEEF BONES, THE RIGGING BEING OF HUMAN HAIR  
Described by experts as perfect in detail, the model is valued at £500

(See also frontispiece, and see also the French Prisoner Model)



## COME AND SEE THIS CHICAMAREE

of the Stars and Stripes. His patrons are owners of the gaming-tables opposite, where men are staking their piles of silver or copper, as means permit. The men sitting down to a savoury dinner at three shillings per head have won heavily at the faro table, and are treating themselves while they are in funds.

Take stock of the lively scenes and the volatile folk who figure in them. Note the variety of clothing worn ; all manner of ways of disguising the hated official blue or yellow uniform are adopted. There are some men who have worked the ravellings of their old stockings into the fabric of the cloth and so covered it with a woollen " fur," in which a design is worked. Others have sewn white facings of linen along the seams of their clothes.

Enter the academy in No. 3 Prison. By the glazed window the schoolmaster is instructing grizzled sailors in spelling and writing, and from the pained expressions on the faces of the old salts it is obvious they find it laborious work.

Beyond is a music class, the members of which are practising with fife, flute, clarinet, and three violins for a concert.

"The Greenhorn" relates that it was not until the procession for the celebration of Washington's birthday, on February 22, that it was realized how many instrumentalists there were in the prison. Fifes, flute, bugles, trumpets, violins, and clarinets in great numbers headed the procession, playing "Hail, Columbia," "Yankee Doodle," and "Washington's March."

See the crowd around the boxing academy, whose stock-in-trade is two pairs of hand-made gloves. Yonder, where heads are bobbing up and down, is the dancing school, whose proprietor has no stock-in-trade at all. He provides the necessary music by whistling. A glee club contributes its harmonies to

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the general noise, in which cribbage and draughts parties play their games, apparently undisturbed.

Behind a canvas screen is the theatre, and the players are dressing for their parts. The little man with long hair and a sabre cut across his cheek is the heroine. He has earned the name of Blowsy Bet because of his fondness for female parts and the length of his hair, which he has sworn not to cut until he returns to America. He pulls up his trousers so they may not be seen below his skirts !

From a big cask a joint stock company sells good porter, and does a roaring trade. A similar company runs the lending library, thinly stocked with well-worn books, which are lent at a halfpenny each, but "The Greenhorn" confides that so low has fallen the taste for letters that the company seldom declares a dividend !

In the yard near the market-gate a number of men are busily engaged preparing for to-morrow's market. They include artists painting pictures, straw-basket makers, a woodcarver at work on a Chinese monster (a man with a real talent for the grotesque, whose productions are sold in the shops of Plymouth and Moretonhampstead), and four men pounding beef bones between stones. They have discovered that, dry as bones appear, an unctuous marrow may be extracted from them when they are powdered and boiled, which commands a shilling a pound, and is used as a shortening for pastry.

In the kitchen of No. 5 Prison we make the acquaintance of the head cook and three assistants, all prisoners. A notice, "No loungers allowed here," is displayed, and the rule is rigidly enforced. The cooks receive 6d. a day and the skimmings and slush from the kettles. But if they are caught skimming too close they are made to pay the penalty—expulsion from the kitchen and perhaps a dozen strokes with the cat !

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The enormous copper boilers have a capacity of 300 gallons, and into these go daily carcasses, which comprise the joints for the mid-day meal, a cart-load of vegetables, and several bushels of barley. From a stack the cooks are weighing out 400 4-lb. loaves—for one prison only of the five.

Along the watercourse through the prison are 50 or 60 men on their knees scrubbing and pounding clothes, and from a network of lines hang drying garments of all descriptions. Some of the workers are professional laundrymen. They take in washing at a halfpenny a piece, or a penny, soap and starch included, extra being charged for ironing.

In No. 4 Prison, where Big Dick holds sway, every second man is marked with small-pox, and there is more gambling, more vice, and more dirt than in all the other prisons put together. The story is told of one occupant of No. 4—a man taken prisoner on the Canadian frontier at the beginning of the war and whose name none knew—that he was counted out even in the “Odd Mess,” which consisted of men who were never permitted to associate with others. He was for ever prowling about the offal heap in search of edible filth, which he swallowed raw as he found it.

Even the Rough Allies banned him. Twice he had been tried, sentenced to be stripped naked, laid in a bathing-pool in mid-winter, and scrubbed with sand and brush. Once he was the subject of a wager that he would eat five loaves of three-quarters of a pound each in a given number of minutes. When time was called half a loaf remained, but by a series of desperate gulps he swallowed it and left the circle without speaking, and as if nothing unusual had happened.

When the last of the French prisoners had left Dartmoor for France all the American captives in

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the country were transferred to Dartmoor, and on the arrival at Princetown of one draft from Stapleton, Bristol, it was reported that twenty-five had escaped while on the march—a striking example of the laxity and inefficiency of the troops used for this work : the Militia. At this time the Militia itself was much addicted to desertion, as was evidenced in the large advertisements I found in the *Plymouth and Dock Telegraph* of the period, containing the names and descriptions of deserters and offers of rewards for information leading to their arrest.

The winter of 1813-14 was said to be the coldest for fifty years. Every stream froze so solidly that water was unobtainable, and the prisoners had to quench their thirst with snow. The prison walls were covered with a film of ice, and the snow, four to five feet deep on the average, was double that depth in the drifts. More than 9000 prisoners and 1500 soldiers and civilians were entirely dependent for food on the snow-blocked road from Plymouth, and 200 French prisoners, as well as guards and civilians, were occupied a whole day in cutting a path to the storehouses. Eight men attempted to escape by scaling the walls, but only one succeeded in getting away, and he, overcome by the severity of the weather, was glad of the succour of a moorman, who brought him back to the prison.

The desperate attempt of these men to escape is used by Eden Phillpotts for one of the most thrilling episodes of his novel, *The American Prisoner*, in which the hero, Cecil Stark, and five companions engage in a foolhardy adventure. They surmount the difficulties the walls present, but the blizzard is so terrible that three are driven back to the prison. One perishes in the snow. Stark and another get through by a miracle. The author's description of the Arctic tempests of that winter on Dartmoor is as brilliant

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and realistic as that by R. D. Blackmore in *Lorna Doone* of a similar winter on Exmoor, when Gurt Jan Ridd performed the Herculean feat of digging out of the snow a flock of sixty sheep, and carrying them, in couples, to the farm—one under each arm.

In 1814 the Americans planned an escape *en masse* by cutting a tunnel under the prison. The idea was to sink a shaft to a depth of twenty feet; indeed, four converging tunnels were conceived, with an outlet below the level of the road outside the boundary walls. The original plan was to operate in Prison 6, and most elaborate precautions were taken to ensure secrecy. Every man was sworn on the Bible to reveal nothing of what was going forward, and a number of confidential agents were appointed as spies to watch the conduct of others and the movements of the turnkeys and sentries. Working parties were formed, and, according to Charles Andrews, work was begun both in No. 6 and No. 4.

The shaft, whose adit was cleverly concealed, was sunk in No. 5 Prison, which was then unoccupied, the mouth being so narrow that it would admit only one or two men; but in the tunnel three or four men could work abreast. Methods of getting rid of the excavated soil were both simple and ingenious. Into the stream, running through the prison at the rate of four miles an hour, were thrown tons of fine dirt, which was borne away by the flow of water. Much was mixed with lime and plastered over the prison walls, then being covered with whitewash. The lime was obtained from the officials who were ready to co-operate in the prisoners' supposed zeal for cleanliness and hygiene. Further, a cavity was found in No. 5 Prison, and into this were thrown tons of soil.

But the plan was doomed to failure. It is claimed that the subterraneous passage had been driven sixty

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feet from No. 5, when suddenly Captain Shortland entered the prison with his guards and informed the Americans that he knew of their operations. But apparently his informer had not told him the exact position of the opening, for it was only after a considerable amount of sounding with crowbars that it was found. What had happened to the soil puzzled Captain Shortland, but the only reply to his questions on the point was, "each man ate his portion to make up for his scant allowance!"

Without penetrating the tunnel, Captain Shortland had the shaft filled with stones and sealed down, and removed every prisoner from the yard which enclosed Nos. 5, 6, and 7 to the enclosure on the north side, which contained Nos. 1, 2, and 3, but, having no suspicion of any attempt to escape in No. 4 (Big Dick's domain), allowed prisoners to remain there.

Andrews asserts that later, when the prisoners had been re-transferred to their old quarters, the work was resumed, and that the excavators got down around the stones which Captain Shortland threw into the shaft, but again they were betrayed, by a man who, in the open day and before all the prisoners in the yard, walked up to one of the turnkeys, and was taken by him to the Agent, to whom he gave information. The man was released and never seen after. The prisoners were immediately removed to Nos. 1 and 2 Prisons, and it is asserted Captain Shortland, in order to make the prisoners contribute to the cost of repairing the damage done to the prisons, put every man on two-thirds allowance. "This he did for ten successive days."

Another version is that the betrayal was by a man from Newbury-Port, who had changed his name in America because he was a forger. Captain Shortland was said to have given him two guineas and sent him to Ireland, or "the prisoners would have him hanged

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as a traitor to his countrymen. The hypocritical scoundrel's excuse was conscience and humanity, for he told Shortland that we intended to murder him and every one else in the neighbourhood. Shortland said he knew better ; that he was fearful of our escaping, but never had any apprehension of personal injury from the Americans ; they delighted in plaguing him and contriving means of escape, but he never saw a cruel or murderous disposition in any of them."

Captain Shortland, of course, kept his own counsel regarding the means by which he discovered the plot. One suggestion was that it was accidental : a few incautious words used within hearing of a turnkey by one of the men engaged in the work.

During excavations in 1881, the stones with which Captain Shortland blocked the shaft were found, and the tunnel was traced to within a few yards of the boundary walls ; but the other tunnels which, according to Charles Andrews, were begun, have never been discovered, and it is difficult to believe that these reached any further than the planning stage,

The main idea of the conspirators was that, following the construction of the tunnel, the prisoners were to wait for a dark and stormy night, and then to make the final break through. Once outside, the men were to find their own ways to Torbay, there to seize fishing craft and sail for the coast of France. It was a wild scheme, with never a chance of real success, even had the tunnels been completed. Its failure did not improve the feeling between prisoners and janitors.

## CHAPTER VI

### BLUNDER—MUTINY—DEATH

A N event which led up to the final tragedy took the form of unadulterated farce. In August of 1814, four men arrived at Dartmoor under sentence of solitary confinement in the cachot for the whole period of their detention, one of them being Simeon Hayes, of Baltimore. After six months they were permitted to exercise every day for half an hour, accompanied by sentries. One day Hayes, during the temporary absence of his guard, broke away, scrambled to the top of the picket fence, and jumped into the north yard, which at the moment was crowded with prisoners. He was concealed first in No. 1 Prison and then in No. 4, where he was disguised as a negro. All attempts by the authorities to find him failed, and because other prisoners would not give him up the market was closed. This had no effect other than to make the prisoners more defiant.

It was found that Hayes had been transferred to No. 5 Prison, and Captain Shortland paraded sixty soldiers with the purpose of driving all the prisoners out at the point of the bayonet. The soldiers were preceded by a capering crowd, who converted the proceedings into pantomime. The prison was entered, but not a prisoner was ejected until a turnkey resorted to the ruse of blowing his horn, whereupon every man left the prison, expecting he knew not what. Left

## BLUNDER — MUTINY — DEATH

to themselves, the soldiers proceeded with their search, but no Hayes was found ; he was coiled, almost suffocated, in a hole covered by a flagstone.

When Shortland returned to the yard he found about 2000 prisoners jammed in the passage between Nos. 5 and 6 Prisons. A stone thrown at him by a boy just grazed his cheek, and already chagrined by defeat he ordered the troops to fire. The officer in command, however, had kept his head, and promptly struck up the muskets with his sword, and gave the order, "As you were." Captain Shortland thereupon left the yard. Tragedy had been averted, but prisoner and soldier alike felt that it had been very near. Though efforts to arrest Hayes were relaxed, a few days later he was the victim of his own temerity, for he was seen and arrested in the yard by the turnkey from whom he had originally slipped away.

It was at this period that the author of the *Journal of a Young Man* arrived at Dartmoor, and he describes how, when the transport *Leyden* from the Medway, anchored in Plymouth Sound, his fellow-captives were too much oppressed with the melancholy prospect of Dartmoor to notice particularly the gallant show of ships and the beautiful scenery which "the dock and bay of Plymouth afforded." When they landed, old women gathered about them with their cakes and ale, and as the men all had a little money they soon emptied the old ladies' baskets and jugs.

"Our march drew to the doors and windows an enchanting sight of fair ladies," he writes ; "compared with our dirty selves they looked like angels peeping out of heaven ; and yet they were neither handsomer nor neater than our sweethearts and sisters in our own dear country."

Here may be interpolated, I think appropriately, another of his dicta. "The two great passions

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square, and as he refused to desist, a soldier knocked him, with the butt end of his musket, to the pavement below. This provoked stone-throwing, and the sentries were driven from their posts. At the time Captain Shortland was at Plymouth, and messages were sent to him, while the contractor had also dispatched orders for bread to be sent.

Meantime the disorder increased, and at night a mob broke through the gate and stormed the store-house at the top of the market square. Officers of the garrison promised the men that they should have bread if they returned to their prisons. They refused, and remained howling and demonstrating for two hours, when the wagons arrived and 9000 lb. of bread were distributed. Then the prisoners returned to their halls. On the following day, Captain Shortland arrived from Plymouth with reinforcements of 200 men.

On April 6, though prison life seemed to have resumed the normal, hidden fires were smouldering. The gamblers were under the spell of their usual games of chance ; other prisoners were indulging in less harmful pastimes. A knot of them were playing fives, and the ball frequently flew over the wall that separated No. 7 from the guards' barrack. The sentry having returned it several times, at length declined to do so any more. Then, threatening to come and fetch the ball themselves, the players, with such tools as were procurable, dug a hole in the wall. Rough Allies also climbed the picket fence, and engaged in skylarking and turf-throwing. Prisoners refused to obey orders to go back to the prisons.

Later it was reported to Captain Shortland that a man in a crowd of rowdies at the main gate had broken the chain of the gate, and that five breaches had been made in the boundary wall, one of which was opposite the building in which the arms of men off duty were

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kept. Really, however, there was no breach in the wall other than that made by the men who were in quest of their ball.

Captain Shortland, acting on the information conveyed to him, formed the opinion that the prisoners intended to seize arms and overpower the garrison. He ordered the bell to be rung summoning the section of the garrison off duty to return to the prison. This also had the effect of bringing hundreds of prisoners, who had retired to their halls, into the market square. Captain Shortland and Dr. McGrath, the medical officer, tried without success to induce the men to return, and the former ordered fifteen men to charge the crowd with fixed bayonets.

Although there was much confusion, contributed to by the derision of the mob for Captain Shortland, the soldiers, without using their bayonets, succeeded in driving back the general body of demonstrators. Others held their ground and challenged Captain Shortland to order the soldiers to fire on them. Whether it was the use of the word "fire" in this way, or some one actually shouted "fire!" was not made clear, even at the inquiries that followed the catastrophe, but at all events several soldiers discharged their muskets over the heads of the rioters, who, instead of being awed, were exasperated.

A second volley was fired, this time into the crowd, several men being killed or wounded. Captain Shortland and other officers, tried frantically to stop the firing, but it was the turn of the soldiers to be out of hand, and they followed the crowd of prisoners retreating to the halls, shooting and bayoneting them. Soldiers on the walls also shot down men who were endeavouring only to reach shelter.

Captain Shortland and the officers at length succeeded in stemming the mischief, but in the fatal few minutes that it had lasted 7 men were killed, 2 died

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subsequently of wounds, 38 were seriously wounded, and 12 slightly wounded, the total casualties being 63.

An inquest and a series of inquiries followed this unhappy affair, and though Captain Shortland was violently condemned by the American prisoners, he was acquitted by these courts, the chief of which was a Joint British and American Commission. He denied having given the order to "Fire." The verdict of the coroner's jury was "Justifiable homicide."

A court consisting of Admiral Sir John Duckworth, commander-in-chief at Plymouth, and Major-General S. Brown also exonerated Captain Shortland, and the international inquiry held by Mr. Charles King, American representative, and Mr. F. S. Larpent, British, while absolving the prisoners of any intention of mutinying, decided that Captain Shortland was justified in his belief of their intention, and could not be blamed for firing on them the first time, if he did give the order, but that there was no justification for firing at unarmed prisoners in the yards.

In their report the two Commissioners, having reviewed the whole of the events leading up to the riot, and indicated that the idea prevailed that there was a massed attempt to escape, proceed : "With regard to any order having been given to fire, the evidence is contradictory. Several of the Americans swear positively that Captain Shortland gave that order ; but the manner in which, from the confusion of the moment, they described this part of the transaction is so different in its details that it is difficult to reconcile their testimony. Many of the soldiers and other English witnesses heard the word given by some one, but not one of them could swear it was by Captain Shortland, or by any one in particular, and some, among whom is the officer commanding the

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guard, think if Captain Shortland gave such an order that they must have heard it, which they did not.

“ In addition to this Captain Shortland denies the fact, and from the situation in which he appears to have been placed at the time, even according to American witnesses, in front of the soldiers, it may appear somewhat improbable that he should have then given such an order. But however it may remain a matter of doubt whether the firing first began in the square by order, or was a spontaneous act by the soldiers themselves, it seems clear that it was continued and renewed both there and elsewhere without orders ; and that on the platforms and in other places about the prisons it was certainly commenced without authority.

“ The fact of an order having been given at first, provided the firing was in the existing circumstances justifiable, does not appear very material in any other point of view than as showing a want of self-possession and discipline in the troops if they should have fired without an order.

“ With regard to the above most important consideration, whether firing was justifiable or not, we are of opinion, in all the circumstances of the case, from the apprehensions which the soldiers might fairly entertain, owing to the numbers and conduct of the prisoners, that this firing was to a certain extent advisable in a military point of view, in order to intimidate the prisoners, and compel them thereby to desist from all acts of violence and to retire as they were ordered, from a situation in which the responsibility of the Agent, and the military, could not permit them with safety to remain.

“ From the fact of the crowd being so close, and the firing being attended with very little injury, it appears probable that a very large proportion of the

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muskets were, as stated by one or two of the witnesses, levelled over the heads of the prisoners ; a circumstance in some respects to be lamented, as it induced them to cry out ‘Blank cartridges,’ and merely irritated and encouraged them to renew their insults to the soldiery, which produced a repetition of the firing in a manner much more destructive.

“ The firing in the square having continued for some time, by which several of the prisoners sustained injuries, the greater part of them appear to have been running back with the utmost precipitation and confusion to their respective prisons, and the cause for further firing seemed at this period to have ceased. It appears, accordingly, that Captain Shortland was in the market square exerting himself and giving orders to that effect, and with Lieut. Fortye had succeeded in stopping the fire of his part of the guard.

“ Under these circumstances it is very difficult to find any justification for the further continuance and renewal of the firing, which certainly took place both in the prison yards and elsewhere ; though we have some evidence of the subsequent provocation given to the military, and resistance to the turnkeys in shutting the prisons, and of stones being thrown out from within the prison doors. The subsequent firing rather appears to have risen from the state of individual irritation and exasperation on the part of the soldiers who followed the prisoners into their yards, and from the absence of nearly all the officers who might have restrained it, as well as from the great difficulty of putting an end to a firing when once commenced under such circumstances. Captain Shortland was from this time busily occupied with the turnkeys in the square, receiving and taking care of the wounded. Ensign White remained with his

guard at the breach, and Lieuts. Ayelyne and Forty, the only other subalterns known to have been present, continued with the main bodies of their respective guards.

" . . . At the same time that the firing was going on in the square a crossfire was also kept up from several of the platforms on the walls round the prisons, where the sentries stand, by straggling parties of soldiers, who ran up there for the purpose. As far as this firing was directed to disperse the men assembled round the breach, for which purpose it was most effectual, it seems to stand upon the same ground as that in the first instance in the square. That part, which it is positively sworn, was directed against straggling parties of prisoners running about the yards and endeavouring to enter in the few doors which the turnkeys, according to usual practice, had left open, does seem, as stated, to have been wholly without object or excuse, and to have been a wanton attack upon the lives of defenceless, and at the same time, unoffending individuals.

" In the same, or even more severe terms, we must remark upon what was proved as to the firing in the doorways of the prison, more particularly into that of No. 3 Prison, at a time when the men were in crowds at the entrance. From the position of the prison and the door, and from the marks of the bullets which were pointed out to us, as well as from the evidence, it was clear that this firing must have proceeded from soldiers a very few feet from the doorway ; and although it was certainly sworn that the prisoners were, at the time of part of the firing at least, continuing to insult, and occasionally to throw stones at the soldiers, and that they were standing in the way of and impeding the turnkey, who was there for the purpose of closing the door, still there was nothing stated which could in our view at all justify

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such excessively harsh and severe treatment of helpless and unarmed prisoners when all idea of escape was at an end.

"Under this impression we used every endeavour to ascertain if there was the least prospect of identifying any of the soldiers who had been carried to the particular outrageous lengths here alluded to, or of tracing any particular death at that time to the firing of any particular individual, but without success, and all hopes of bringing the offenders to punishment would seem to be at an end.

"In conclusion, we the undersigned, have only to add that while we lament, as we do most deeply, the unfortunate transaction which has been the subject of this inquiry, we find ourselves unable to suggest any steps to be taken as to those parts of it which seem to call for redress and punishment."

The Committee of Americans, through whom all the public business of the prisoners was transacted, and who had in their possession several documents relating to this "brutal butchery," fixed all the blame for it on Captain Shortland, and added in their report, "We here solemnly aver that there was no pre-conceived plan to attempt to break out. There cannot be produced the least shadow of reason or inducement for that intention, because the prisoners were daily expecting to be released and to embark on board cartels for their native country. We likewise solemnly assert that there was no intention of resisting in any manner the authority of this Depot."

The Committee were incensed at the findings of the Commissioners, and sent a strong protest and criticism to their official representative for transmission to their Government.

## BLUNDER — MUTINY — DEATH

"Shortland! Thou foul monster and inhuman villain!" sums up the hatred of the American prisoners. In contrast, M. Catel, the historian of the French prisoners, describes Captain Shortland as an excellent (or a fine) man.

Only time could soothe the feelings of those who were convinced that they and their unfortunate comrades who fell were the victims of a fearful blunder, and for the remainder of their sojourn at Dartmoor the Americans were permitted to do much as they pleased. On April 20, six weeks after the ratification of peace, the first draft of 249 men marched out of the prison for Plymouth, to the cheers of their 5000 odd comrades who had to wait their turn. A week later another draft of 350 followed them, and the laxity in the prison at that time is clear from the fact that 100 escaped, some of them in broad daylight, and with their baggage, the sentries making no effort to stop them.

There were further drafts at intervals, and at the beginning of July the number remaining had fallen to 900, half of them being negroes. Within a few days three more drafts marched away and left the prison in the occupation of French prisoners, of whom 4000 had arrived during the first four days from the battlefields of the Hundred Days' War. One force of 2500 were marched from Plymouth under a guard of only 300 Militiamen.

Bonaparte's "come back" had ended disastrously, and from July 26 to August 8 he was a prisoner in the *Bellerophon*, in Plymouth Sound. When he was at length safely at St. Helena, the evacuation of Dartmoor by French prisoners was begun. The last of them left on February 10, 1816, and Princetown became a village of grass-grown highways, closed shops, and houses falling into ruin, while the great

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prison lay a scene of desolate stillness, and as Carrington grandiloquently described it :

“ Silent now—  
How silent that grand pile, where England held  
Within her victor grip the vanquished foe ;  
Oh here, full many a blooming cheek was blenched :  
Oh here, full many a gallant heart was quelled  
By stern captivity : protracted till  
Hope almost ceased to bless the drooping brave.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHURCH BUILT BY PRISON HANDS

THE interpolation in the story of Dartmoor Prison even of a short chapter on the Parish Church may at first appear a little incongruous. But the history of the church is inseparable from that of the prison, for if there had been no prison there would have been no church, indeed, no Princetown ; while St. Michael's is probably the only parish church in existence built by prisoners, and every summer is visited by numbers of Americans, many of whom are descendants of the builders.

The work, begun in 1810, was finished in 1815, the prisoner-artisans and labourers being paid a wage of 6d. a day. Frenchmen did the stone-work, and when they left after the Peace of Amiens the Americans took over the task, and were responsible for the wood-work and the interior equipment of the building. The registers show that in its earliest years the edifice was referred to as Dartmoor Church. The first burial of a convict in the churchyard was on May 31, 1851, a few months after the reopening of the prison.

For thirty years graves of convicts were merely unidentifiable mounds. Then a small granite stone bearing the initials of the prisoner and year of death was affixed to each grave. Now rows of such stones bear silent testimony to the number of men who came to Dartmoor never to leave it.

It was originally intended that a peal of bells

## DARTMOOR PRISON

should be hung in the tower. In process of transport the bells had reached Plymouth when peace was declared, and were never sent to Princetown. They were conveyed to Devonport (or Dock as it was named then), where they were hung in the tower of the Dockyard chapel.

The east window of the church is a beautifully designed stained-glass memorial to the American prisoners, and the following record of the gift is hung in the church :

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES DAUGHTERS OF 1812,

332 West Eighty-Seventh Street,  
New York City, U.S.A.

Hereby presents this memorial east window to St. Michael's Church, Princetown, Dartmoor, to the glory of God and in memory of the American Prisoners of War who were detained in the Dartmoor War Prison between the years 1813-15, and who helped to build the church ; and especially of the 218 brave men who died here in behalf of their country.

*Dulce est pro patria mori.*

Saturday, ye 4th day of June, in the year of Our Lord, 1910.

The members of this organization resident in the several States herein named of the United States of America have contributed towards the fund for this window in a spirit of cordial international co-operation.

Mrs. WILLIAM GERRY SLADE,  
*President National.*

BEATRICE LARNED WHITNEY,  
*Chairman.*

The names of the States are inscribed on either side of the illuminated record, which is suffering badly from the damp that defaces certain parts of the building. One wonders why an effort is not made to prevent this. A more appropriate place for such a record would be somewhere near the memorial window, rather than just inside the main entrance.

## CHURCH BUILT BY PRISON HANDS

Princetown acknowledges the debt it owes to Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt by a stately memorial in the church, bearing the inscription :

"Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, Knight, late of Tor Royal, Lord Warden of the Stannaries, and many years Usher of the Black Rod, died February 24, 1833, aged 71. His name and memory are inseparable from the great works in Dartmoor, and cannot cease to be honoured in this district."

Carrington is even more eulogistic in his apostrophe of Sir Thomas :

"The civic wreath,  
Tyrwhitt, is thine, distinguished amid the band  
Of British patriots glowing with the love  
Of country and of man. . . . Lo, along the iron way  
The rocks gigantic slide. The peasant view,  
Amazed, the masses of the wild moor move  
Swift to the destined port. The busy pier  
Groans 'neath the granite spoils : the future pile  
Is there—the portal vast—the column tall—  
The tower—the temple—and the mighty arch  
That yet shall span the torrent."

The allusion is to the building of the railway and the transport of granite for use in some of the most famous buildings and works in London.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FROM WAR TO CONVICT PRISON

LONG years had passed after the last of the prisoners of war left Princetown before the great semi-fortress again became a prison, though many efforts were made to solve the problem of its utilization in practical ways. As early as 1818 it was reported by a committee of the House of Commons that if the buildings on Dartmoor continued to be untenanted they would fall into decay, and that it would be a considerable benefit to the country if they could be kept up, without expense, by the establishment there of schools of industry.

"In consequence of this suggestion a meeting for the purpose of forming such an establishment" (so the story runs in Lysons' *History of Devon*) "was held at the Mansion House in the month of May 1820. At this meeting, Henry Brougham, Esq., M.P., announced that His Majesty had given his sanction to such appropriation of these buildings, had granted a portion of the waste for the purpose of the establishment, had made the princely donation of £1000 towards its support, and named himself the patron of the institution. The object of the benevolent supporters of this plan was to remove a considerable number of poor children from their profligate associates in the Metropolis to Dartmoor, where they are to be religiously educated and trained in the culture and dressing of flax. In the first instance the children

## FROM WAR TO CONVICT PRISON

selected for the purpose were to be of the description of orphans only. Some unforeseen difficulties having occurred, the resolution past mentioned has not as yet (1822) been put in execution."

Eventually the scheme was abandoned—fortunately, I imagine, for the children. "The culture and dressing of flax" evidenced the hand of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt in the scheme, for his aims for Princetown included not only the growing of flax, but the erection of spinning factories. Sir Thomas, however, was not destined to see the realization of this or of any of his other ideas for the use of the prison, for he died in 1833—seventeen years before the prison actually housed convicts.

Another suggestion for the repeopling of Dartmoor was that, in an effort to check the flow of emigration, men who would otherwise have gone to the colonies were to occupy the buildings and engage in the work of reclaiming the waste lands of the moor and bringing them into cultivation. It is not surprising that this proposal was also found impracticable, and the prison remained silent and deserted, with the hand of Time falling heavily upon the buildings, in spite of the efforts of the Duchy of Cornwall to keep them in some sort of repair.

All attempts to revive the fortunes of Princetown failed. In November of 1818, Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt unfolded to the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce a scheme for the building of a railway to Princetown, and with such vigour did he pursue it, that the line was constructed at a cost of £66,000 and opened in September 1823. Because of its sinuous course, rendered necessary by the gradients to be overcome, the railway covered twenty-three miles instead of the sixteen or seventeen that lie by road between Plymouth and Princetown. Its terminus was at King Tor, and the permanent way consisted of rails fastened to

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granite blocks. Though styled a railway, it was really a horse-tramway for the conveyance of granite between King Tor and the Laira estuary at Plymouth.

In 1880, the line was reconstructed as a modern railway. From Yelverton to Princetown the distance, as the crow flies, is only six miles, but the railway covers eleven, winding serpent-like around the tors. At King Tor the loop is so long and narrow that a person may meet the train there, walk across the neck by the granite quarries, and arrive at the northern side of the tor before the locomotive has puffed its way with its little load to that point of its climb to Princetown.

Though useful in conveying granite from the moor, the original railway did not restore the good times that had been prophesied. During the '30's there was a revival of the granite industry, and the church, built in the years 1810-15 by prisoners of war, was reopened in 1831, after being closed for a long period. At this time there were not more than thirty houses in the village. In 1846, the British Patent Naphtha Company was granted the use of the prison infirmary as a retort house for the production of naphtha and other products from peat, but the enterprise failed.

The Prince Consort visited the prison in 1846, and, "seeing it was not a place which could be dealt with by private enterprise," supported the old scheme for using it as a penal establishment. But it was not until 1850 that the first steps were taken to carry this into effect. The Prince Consort was interested, because the lease granted to the State in 1805 had reverted, in 1816, to the Duchy of Cornwall, to which the Prince of Wales had succeeded.

Though men directly interested in Princetown supported the conversion of the buildings into a convict prison there was also some hostility, inspired by resentment of encroachments on the rights of

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the commoners and the public as a whole, and opposition to the enclosure of any portion of the moor. Though this was not markedly vocal at the time, as years passed the protests against enclosures became very vigorous.

The Forest of Dartmoor (with rights of chase) was granted to the Black Prince, as Duke of Cornwall, by charter dated March 1336, and the Duchy of Cornwall, then created, has been held by successive Dukes of Cornwall (Princes of Wales) ever since. In the time of King John it comprised, according to existing documents (dated 1204) 130,000 acres of uncultivated and unreclaimed land, and there is evidence that it was in the hands of the Crown before King John held it. It was granted as a chase and not a manor, and as early as 1832 an inquest found that the commoners lying round should have the common with their beasts, and turf, heath, furze, and stones, for their use. "They have used the premises from the time whereof memory is not," it is quaintly recorded.

In 1296, returns show that there were 5000 head of cattle, 487 horses, and 131 folds of sheep on the moor. In 1531, the Duchy officials reported to the King that the commoners' rights are to have "all that may do them good except green oak and venison," or more properly vert and venison, vert being the forest term for trees and underwood. In 1608, a presentment was made by the Duchy of Cornwall Court, setting out the rights of the commoners.

It was, therefore, contended that the enclosure of any part of the forest was inconsistent with the rights of the venil tenants and of every Devonshire man, because the enclosure of land could not be otherwise than an injury to their common rights. Strong expressions of this view are found in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* of nearly

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sixty years ago, when a well-known authority of the period declared that the "most serious innovation recently made in the shape of enclosures have been the work of the wretched convicts of the prison at Princetown."

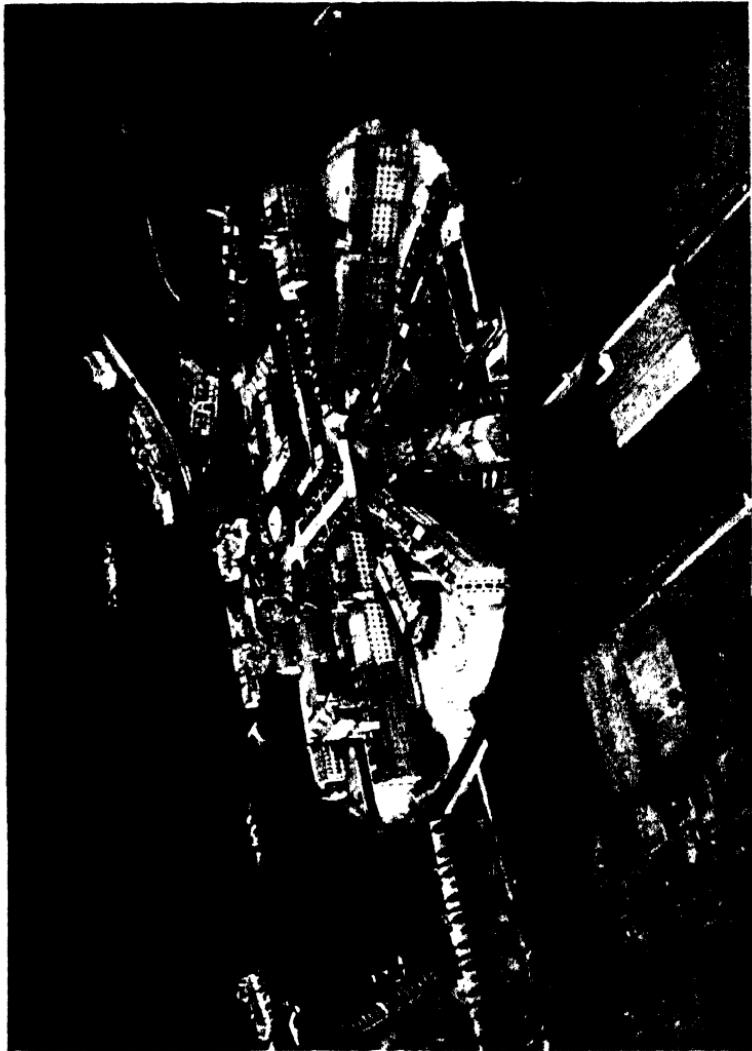
"The law condemns both man and woman  
Who steals the goose from off the common,  
But lets the greater felon loose  
Who steals the common from the goose."

"Therefore," he argued, "it would appear that the felons in Dartmoor Prison are set to work, by way of improving their morals and thoroughly reforming their characters, to steal the common from the goose." His reply to pleas that it was done with cheap labour, was contained in his question, "How can labour be cheap when it has to be watched by a cordon of pickets with loaded rifles?"

This champion of public rights was voicing not only the views of the archaeologist and antiquary that Dartmoor should remain unenclosed, but also the opinion of the commoner, between whom and the Duchy there was for a long period an unceasing feud, which finds racy expression in the assertion of one of Mr Eden Phillpotts' characters that "The Duchy's like the peace of God—past understanding."

The Dartmoor Preservation Society later endeavoured to induce the Devon County Council to purchase Dartmoor and dedicate it to the public, and one of the several reasons urged for this course was the enclosures that were proceeding under the Prison Commissioners and other people. But the Duchy declined to sell, and the County Council, on their part, was not favourable to any attempt to buy, though they set up a committee to explore the suggestion.

The reply of authorities who spoke for the Prison



DARTMOOR PRISON FROM THE AIR



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Commissioners to all allegations of illegal enclosure was that their farm is held upon lease from the Duchy, and that the enclosure has never varied an inch since it was granted. The land is surrounded by a turf wall, and the terms of the lease bind the Commissioners to reclaim a minimum acreage of the enclosed land annually until the whole is brought under cultivation. At the termination of the lease the land reverts to the Duchy. More than 2000 acres lie within the bounds held by the Prison Commissioners. More than 1500 acres have been reclaimed, and 500 acres remain rough pasture.

The land is divided into fields of from fifteen to twenty acres, intersected by roads. It is trenched from two to two and a half feet deep ; the lower soil being merely turned over and not brought to the surface. The sod is buried about a foot deep, and there is the necessary draining. A rotation of crops for which the land is proved suitable is followed, with very fair results. A substantial acreage of meadow land is laid out for irrigation and the utilization of the sewage from the prison, and another thirty acres or so are devoted to the growing of garden vegetables. The farm is stocked with a herd of cows, a large flock of sheep, and pigs. It is worked with Clydesdale horses and there is a stud of Dartmoor ponies.

But to return to the opening of the prison as a penal settlement. This was influenced not by agreement or opposition to enclosure, but by the inexorable march of events. The revolt of the Colonies against being made dumping grounds for Britain's criminals, and the problem of finding other accommodation than that of existing congested gaols and prison hulks, forced a decision that Dartmoor should receive convicts, after a scheme to convert the buildings into an institution to receive 700 juvenile offenders against

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the law at a cost of £72,000 had been rejected. A new lease of the property was granted in 1849 by the Duchy of Cornwall to the State, and in September of the following year No. 3 Prison was repaired by local labour for the reception of convicts. In November 1850, the first drafts of convicts arrived, and then the work of restoration, engaged in by both free and convict labour, was pushed on until its completion at a total cost of £26,000, accommodation being provided for 1300 prisoners.

Captain Gambier was the first governor, and the guard was comprised of soldiers—three officers and 80 non-commissioned officers and men. The military system, however, did not work well, and in 1854 a guard of pensioners was substituted for the soldiers. This, however, was no more successful, and early in 1857 was displaced by a civil guard. The prison, which from the start had been officered internally by civilians, therefore passed entirely into civilian control, and experience has proved the latter system to be immensely superior to that in which troops were engaged.

Gradually the civil guard was improved, and from 1880 onwards consisted of an excellent type of officer, drawn from the Navy and Army and the industrial classes of the country. In later years the civil guard was abolished, and its duties fell on the general staff.

The charge is sometimes made against prison officers that they are callous martinets, but experience has shown them, as a rule, to be humane men who take a fatherly interest in the prisoners. Occasionally there may be irregularities, though these are more often prompted by an undiscriminating sympathy than by chicanery, and, when discovered, the offenders are dealt with by the authorities—by the suspension, transfer, or, in rare cases, dismissal of the offenders.

In April 1852 the prison was again visited by the Prince Consort, who made a thorough inspection of the buildings and the work of the convicts in reclaiming waste land and cutting peat for fuel. By 1859 the average number of convicts was 1040. In this period, Sir Joshua Jebb, Surveyor-General of Prisons, put into operation the advanced views he held regarding prison administration, but the results aimed at were not achieved. Discipline was lax, and assaults on prison officers were common, the assailants being sent to Exeter for trial.

The dietary system was liberal, so much so that the prisoners had more bread than they could eat, and the poorer people of the vicinity visited the prison daily and collected surplus bread for their own consumption. Convicts in the fourth stage were allowed beer on Sundays, Sir Joshua apparently believing in the theory expressed in a sign I used to see over a village alehouse in Dorset :

"I trust no wise man will condemn  
A cup of genuine now and then.  
When you are faint, your spirits low,  
Your string relaxed, 'twill bend your bow,  
Brace your drumhead, and make you tight,  
Wind up your watch and set you right :  
But then, again, the too much use  
Of all strong liquors is an abuse.  
"Tis liquid makes the solid loose,  
The texture and whole frame destroys :  
But health lies in the Equipoise."

But evidently beer did not maintain the equipoise of Dartmoor prisoners, and the tobacco of the present day, which fourth class men are permitted to smoke, is much more soothing. Or so it appears from the fact that the great grievance of the men of other classes is that they are not permitted to share in the privilege.

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But to revert to the '50's. So far from making prisoners amenable to control, and reconciled to the penalties their misdeeds had brought upon them, the efforts to bribe them into good conduct and industry by an excessive dietary only whetted their appetites for more. They gave the maximum of trouble, and feeling between them and their custodians was extremely bad. There were mutinies, and escapes were numerous and often successful, a fact with which I will deal later. It was not until 1865, when Captain Stopford was appointed governor, that discipline began to improve. Then, for a period of fifteen or sixteen years, the keynote of administration was strictness, though a system directed to the suppression of crime included also attempts at reclamation.

The numbers in the prison fluctuated from time to time between 500 or 600 and 1200. In recent years the total has fallen, because in the reorganization of the penal system numbers of prisoners have been transferred to other gaols, and Dartmoor has been reserved for the recidivist, or old lag, and the intermediate—a man undergoing penal servitude for the first time, though he has served terms of imprisonment in local gaols.

At intervals, there has been a great deal of rebuilding and reconstruction. The inner wall, which was a feature of the prison in its earliest years, has gone, and the remaining wall been raised to a height of from 18 ft. to 20 ft. Some of the old buildings were demolished and new halls and a hospital erected in their places. One of the old halls, still standing, was repeatedly referred to during the mutiny trial as "the old prison."

The picture of dank and reeking walls, which at one time was a true representation of the condition of the gaol, has long since been obliterated by rebuilding, improved methods of ventilation, and central

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heating, and no matter what the weather conditions, the prison is now as dry and comfortable as a prison may be.

Many prisoners of national and international repute have been confined within the walls of Dartmoor. Michael Davitt, one of the stormy petrels of Irish politics, found a home here in the '70's with a number of terrorist Fenians, and, as a Member of Parliament, returned to the scene in 1897, when he signed the visitors' book and showed that he, at all events, nursed no resentful feeling towards the gaol or its administrators.

In Volume I. of *Public Opinion* (1898), Davitt describes his impressions when he revisited Dartmoor, and he also gave evidence before the Commission inquiring into allegations of ill-treatment of Fenian prisoners.

The Tichborne Claimant (Arthur Orton or Thomas Castro) also served a portion of his sentence at Dartmoor, and Michael Davitt, in his *Leaves from My Prison Diary*, records that the Claimant's arrival, after he had completed the usual probationary period in Millbank Penitentiary, created unusual excitement among both warders and prisoners, but particularly among the latter.

"Sir Roger soon became the lion of the place," Davitt writes. "To fall into exercise file with him on Sunday was esteemed an event to be talked of for a week afterwards by the fortunate convict, who had for once in his life rubbed his skirts against one of England's proud aristocracy. To settle an argument on any topic—legal, political, or disciplinary—required but the assertion, 'Sir Roger Tichborne says so,' and immediate acquiescence in the conclusiveness of the facts or opinions advanced was the consequence. In fact, 'Sir Roger' soon became the recognized authority upon every matter of moment to the one

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thousand citizens of Dartmoor's criminal population, from the merits of the skilly to the evils of trial by jury, or from the partisanship of judges to the quality of the shin of beef soup, and the acquisition to that secluded and unique society of such a man was put down among the list of great events in the history of Dartmoor. He remained the standard authority upon juries, judges, and victims of circumstantial evidence with the whole chorus of existing magsmen until he was finally removed to another prison."

It is not surprising after this to learn that the Claimant soon became a troublesome prisoner, and had to undergo the penalty of bread and water.

Many other men who have figured prominently in the public eye have served portions of their sentences at Dartmoor, though it is reputed to be not a place of "stars." So much is revealed in a story told by Jabez Balfour in *My Prison Life*. He was never at Dartmoor, but once thought he was going there. He was being driven from Wormwood Scrubs to another prison, and tried to get from the warden the name of his new abiding place. By a process of exhaustion in naming prisons, Balfour came at last to the question :

"Are we going to Dartmoor?"

"There are no 'stars' at Dartmoor," was the reply.

And so at last he deduced that he was not going to "The Moor," but to Parkhurst.

In addition to every other species of criminal the prison has housed anarchists. In 1894, one Joseph Farnaro, having been sentenced to twenty years penal servitude for manufacturing bombs with intent, etc., was sent to Dartmoor. Immediately after the judge passed sentence, Farnaro shouted the defiance, "Vive l'Anarchie!" Later, when the Bishop of Exeter was visiting the prison for a confirmation

service, and had reached the most solemn part of the ceremony, Farnaro mounted a seat on which he and other prisoners were sitting, and cried "Vive l'Anarchie! Vive Ravachol!" punctuating his exclamations with violent gesticulations, amid which he was seized and marched off to the punishment cells.

Monte Carlo Wells was at Dartmoor, and it was recorded of him that while there he made a study of Dickens. Charles Wells, it will be recalled, "broke the bank" at Monte Carlo not once, but several times, in a single day. Twelve times the croupiers had to send for more funds, but it all came back in the end. It is said that Wells was an amazing braggart about his luck. "To-morrow at eleven o'clock I will break the bank," he would say, and he was as good as his word. He played on no system. Yet he returned to England with his pockets lined with gold. The next season he was back in his own private yacht, but six weeks later, in August of 1892, the yacht was sold by auction. Wells was "broke," and the casinos had won back nearly the whole of the fortune he had gained. The rest he had spent in reckless extravagance.

Wells was at Dartmoor, I believe, more than once, and even there was continually evolving fantastic schemes for making fortunes for people who could be induced to entrust him with their money when he was again at liberty, yet these were inspired, not by villainy, but by an incurable optimism and an almost infantile faith in Luck. Of him Sir Basil Thomson has written, "He remains a memory of the pleasantest and most unselfish rascals that has passed through my hands."

The Penge murder was the sensation of the '70's, and following his reprieve Stanton was at Dartmoor for many years. Stinnie Morrison (or Morris Stein) was there for three years before he committed the

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crime for which he paid the death penalty. Brown and Kennedy, the murderers of Police-constable Gutteridge, also served sentences at "The Moor," and stories are recalled of Brown's sullen disposition and violent hatred of all control.

Rerieved men who had been convicted and sentenced to death for murders which loomed large in the criminal history of England have also served portions of their life sentences at Dartmoor, but for the reason that they are still paying the penalty in one prison or another I omit their names.

One man of international ill-fame nearly met his death at the hands of a fellow-convict at Dartmoor. He and his wife (from America) had long figured as the leaders of a freak religious crusade, of which, it eventually proved, there was a terribly dark and sordid side that landed him at Dartmoor. One day a convict, who had evidently been waiting his time, sprang at the pseudo-prophet, and before the officers could intervene, had almost killed him. The assailant, according to his own story, was actuated by an overwhelming desire to avenge his daughter, who was one of the man's victims, and he had no regrets for his attack but was ready to take its consequences.

When the Sinn Feiners were at "The Moor," they proved a very unruly and difficult type of prisoner. They were neither amenable to discipline nor responsive to the kindly attitude of the officers. The defiant and challenging note they sounded when, with boisterous song and shout, they arrived at Princetown, was maintained to the end, when they were transferred to Lewes.

And so with the ever-changing convict personnel, the record of the prison is brought down from decade to decade. At intervals the system of administration and supervision was supplemented and strengthened. In 1880 visitors were appointed to make periodical

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inspections, and in 1900 a Board of Visitors, with judicial powers, was established. The latter are magistrates who deal with such offences committed in prison as are deemed to be too serious to be left to the responsibility of the governor.

Among its other distinctions, Dartmoor claims that of being the only convict prison that has been burgled, for on August 17, 1890, an ex-convict succeeded in breaking into it—only to fall into the hands of his old janitors. Joe Denny, a negro, had proved an obstreperous prisoner while he was serving his sentence, and no doubt was subjected to well-deserved punishment, which, however, he resented so much that when at length he was released he vowed vengeance against the chief warden.

Several months passed, and then on that August night the alarm bell linking the semaphore station with the gate rang violently. There was no apparent cause other than that some unknown person was tugging at the connecting wire. A search of the prison resulted in the capture of Denny, who, having walked from London, broke into the prison for the purpose, so he boldly asserted, of killing the chief warden.

Subsequently, in a shed on the farm the carcase of a sheep was found. Its head had been smashed in with a club, and a piece of flesh cut from the shoulder.

Handed over to the police, Denny was charged at Tavistock with burglary. He told the magistrates that he killed the sheep and ate the meat raw. He had intended to set the prison on fire, but the ringing of the bell when he fouled the connecting wire foiled him.

Committed for trial at Devon Assizes, Denny was there sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. I believe he died in prison.

## CHAPTER IX

### DARTMOOR 'NEATH THE SNOWS

MUCH has been spoken and written of the terrible climatic conditions of Dartmoor. But, as I emphasized earlier, there are two sides of the picture. While no more glorious health-giving area in summer and autumn exists, only those who have experienced them can realize the conditions that prevail in winter. The difference is summed up graphically in the reply of a native who, asked in the summer where he lives, exclaims proudly : "Dartymoor, what dost thee think ?" and in winter lugubriously mumbles, "Dartymoor, good lor' ! "

I have already written of the great blizzards of the period during which the prison housed French and American captives, and will now come down to the time of its occupation by convicts. In February 1853 there was a snowstorm of Arctic severity, during which wagons conveying meat for the prison were snowed up at Merrivale, and one hundred convicts were employed cutting a road through the snow to enable the contractors to bring in the meat. Two privates of the 7th Royal Fusiliers set out to walk from Plymouth to join their company at Princetown. They reached Jump, Roborough, where they were met by a corporal. On arriving at Dousland, the landlord of the inn advised them not to go on, as snow was falling and the conditions they would have

to fight when they climbed Peak Hill and faced the open moor were appalling. Remarking that they must obey orders, they decided to push on. Battling through heavy snowdrifts, the men succeeded in reaching Devil's Bridge, of evil fame, about a mile from Princetown. There the snow was too formidable for them, and apparently they retraced their steps. Soon, however, they were overcome by the cold, and the two privates, sinking into the snow, perished. The corporal struggled back, and surmounting the difficulties of Devil's Bridge, succeeded in reaching a spot within two hundred yards of the Duchy Hotel at Princetown, where he, too, fell to rise no more, his body being found when conditions permitted of a search being made.

The snowstorm of January 4, 1854, was said to be the worst for forty years. The prison was isolated for five days. Then parties of convicts, supervised by a strong guard, cut their way through the snow to Dousland and brought up provisions.

In the winter of 1864-65 the weather was again of the severest description, and during a snowstorm, Owen Sweeney, one of the schoolmasters in the prison service, while walking from Tavistock to Princetown, was overcome by the intense cold and sank down in a snowdrift, being later found dead by warders who went in search of him. The snow lay for weeks, and 300 convicts were employed in cutting a road over the moor for the meat carts, and in clearing the leat of snow.

In January of 1866 there was another blizzard, the drifts in some places being fifteen feet in depth, and the prison was entirely cut off from the outer world. Terrific rain brought relief, and also what was for a time worse than snow, the flooding of the prison. A few weeks later there was further flooding during a gale, which also blew in the chapel windows.

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## DARTMOOR PRISON

From January 11 to February 1, 1881, Dartmoor again suffered the brunt of a blizzard that swept the south-west of England. For nearly twenty-four hours snow fell continuously. The depth generally was from three to four feet, and there were drifts twelve feet deep. Roads were completely impassable, and for days Princetown was isolated. Neither posts nor newspapers were received, and with supplies cut off even more effectually than by a blockade, fresh provisions were exhausted in the prison, where the 1000 to 1200 convicts were reduced to a diet of oatmeal, salt pork, and treacle. The pork had been kept in pickle for use in an emergency of this nature. But there was a limit to this, and eventually the Governor had some of the farm stock slaughtered, not only for use in the prison but also for sale to the villagers.

Even water presented a serious problem, for every source was frozen, and it was difficult to obtain wood for fires with which to melt the snow for drinking-water or heat. Large numbers of cattle and sheep perished on the moor, and about twenty of the prison flock were found dead under the snow.

In February, a terrific hurricane swept over Princetown, accompanied by thunder and lightning, as well as hail, the stones (so it was reported at the time) being an inch in diameter. A house at Rundlestone was struck by lightning, which caused great havoc. An employee at the prison gasworks, who was in bed at the time, was rendered insensible by the shock, and the bedclothes were fired. His wife had just risen, and was going downstairs, when a watch she was carrying was struck by lightning and smashed to pieces.

Ten years later (in March 1891) yet another blizzard raged over Dartmoor; indeed, the visitation covered the whole of southern England. Roads and

## DARTMOOR 'NEATH THE SNOWS

railways were blocked to phenomenal depths. The storm began on March 9, the snow being driven by a terrific wind. The children attending the Prison Officers' School were sent home at midday, but five boys remained for afternoon school, there being no thought that the conditions would become so terrible. As the afternoon wore on, however, it was decided to keep the boys in the school, and fires were banked and food provided for them by the schoolmaster. One of the five, who lived nearest, decided to fight his way home, where he arrived safely. The others, with two men as company, remained all night, during which one of the windows of the boys' school was blown in, a great part of the slating of the church was torn off, the shutters of the Post Office were blown away, and many buildings unroofed.

Telegraph wires were down, and there was no possibility of communication with the outside world. The evening train from Princetown, which left on the 9th with six passengers—four men and two women—ran into a snowdrift at Egford siding, about half a mile on the Princetown side of Peak Tor, and nothing was heard of it until the guard arrived at Dousland at nine o'clock on the morning of the 10th, having struggled through the snow to obtain assistance. Two packers were dispatched with food, and reached the train, and the driver then fought his way to Dousland, taking four hours to cover the two and a half miles.

The passengers remained in the train throughout Tuesday, preferring the discomforts they had to undergo to the risks of fighting their way to Dousland through the snow. On the morning of the 11th they saw a farmer searching for his lost sheep, and his attention having been attracted, he obtained assistance, and, releasing the passengers after their thirty-six hours' confinement in the train, took them to his

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farm, where they were accommodated until it was possible for them to leave for their homes.

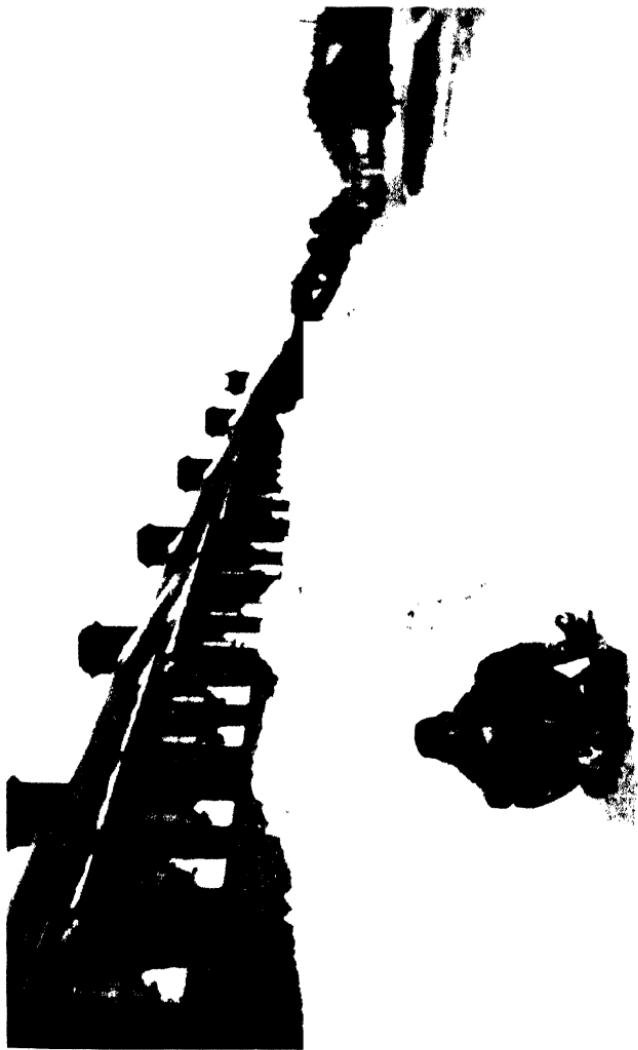
Meanwhile, at Princetown, the snow lay to a depth of eight to ten feet, and officers had great difficulty in getting into the prison on the morning of the 10th. Between their quarters and the prison, convicts were employed in cutting through the snow, which in places lay to a depth of twelve feet.

The Governor (Captain Every) sent out parties to care for the farm stock and to dig out sheep that had been buried by snow. The regular meat supplies and other provisions did not reach the prison for nearly a fortnight, and the prisoners became rebellious against a succession of meals of salt meat. Their resentment and insubordination became so pronounced that the governor ordered some of the prison stock to be slaughtered to provide a supply of fresh meat.

One warder was stabbed in the neck by a convict, and the temper of the men became so threatening that the governor reported the situation to the Home Secretary, who immediately made representations to the Great Western Railway Company, pressing that the work of clearing the railway of snow and restarting a train service should be undertaken at once.

Seven days after the blizzard began, railway officials, in response to the representation of the Home Secretary, made an attempt to clear the line, any previous effort being impossible, because the main and branch lines everywhere were also blocked. A gang of fifty men accompanied a train and snow-plough, but had reached only half a mile from Yelverton station when the plough stuck. The men dug a trench on either side of the engine, but even then the train failed to cut through a drift of 220 yards, and the work had to be abandoned.

On the 17th another attempt was made, the number of workmen being increased to eighty. They



PRISON OFFICERS' QUARTERS AT DARTMOOR SNOWED UP AFTER A BLIZZARD  
On occasion officers have to be dragged out of their houses before they can reach the prison for duty



## DARTMOOR 'NEATH THE SNOWS

cut a path through the drifts to Loversy crossing, which enabled the plough to get to work. It reached Egford, where work was directed to clearing the train that had been snowed up for eight days. By the time this was accomplished steam was up, and, preceded by the snow-plough, the train ran to Dousland. By the end of the day the clearance of line had proceeded to within  $3\frac{1}{4}$  miles of Princetown, where a gang of men had been at work clearing from the station downward. The following day the job was resumed, and reached a point where the officials felt justified in sending the snow-plough back to Yelverton for a coach filled with fresh meat for the prison. It returned with its precious load, but the final stretch of clearing work was more difficult than anticipated, and when at last the train got through it was some hours later than expected.

Relief was effected and traffic resumed after having been interrupted for eleven days. There was then some distress in the village, and gangs of convicts had been employed on the main roads with the object of restoring communication with neighbouring places. That evening a special goods train was sent from Yelverton with supplies from Plymouth for both the prison and the village. For more than a week the villagers received neither letters nor telegrams. Then the postmaster and other officials trudged to Yelverton and brought up on their backs fourteen bags of mails.

Not the least grateful for the raising of Nature's siege were the convicts due for release, but who had been detained. Eager to go, yet they realized the futility of claiming their right, and accepted their position as "boarders," rather than prisoners, until conditions improved.

Although there were periodical snowstorms subsequent to 1891, there was not another blizzard

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comparable with the blizzards of that year and 1881, until 1927. Then there was a visitation the more memorable because it began on Christmas Day, just about the hour when families gather round the fireside for the evening festivities. The snow fell throughout the night and continued on Boxing Day, and for four or five days Princetown was isolated as completely as if it were amid the snows of the Far North. A curious feature was that although the fall was so heavy on the moor, yet at Plymouth, only a few miles distant, the sun shone on Boxing Day, and though it was intensely cold, no snow fell.

That morning the people of Princetown awoke to find they were absolutely snowed in, the drifts reaching as high as the bedroom windows of their houses. From the prison, officers and convicts had to dig pathways to the houses of those officers who were due for duty, and then shovel away the drifts sufficiently to enable the latter to leave by the upper windows. A small party of officers who had been on Christmas leave fought their way through the snow the whole distance from Yelverton to Princetown, where they arrived utterly exhausted.

Parties of officers and convicts ventured out in search of missing sheep and cattle, and about 130 sheep were rescued in a single day, having literally to be carried to a fold. A convict, whose sentence terminated on Boxing Day, determined to trudge to Yelverton in the hope of joining a train on the branch line to Plymouth, and thence travelling to London. The Governor (Captain Morgan) urged him to remain until the weather improved, but the man resolved to take the risk, and started on what proved to be an impossible walk.

After struggling for three hours against the blinding snow driven by a piercing wind, he managed to return to the prison, where he remained as a lodger for two

## DARTMOOR 'NEATH THE SNOWS

days. Then he asked to be released, and, still against the advice of the governor, went plunging through the snowdrifts. After several hours' exhausting effort, he reached Yelverton hatless and with icicles hanging from his clothes. He eventually travelled to London and joined his family in a belated celebration of Christmas.

On the third day of the storm a train, drawn by two engines and equipped with a snow-plough, started to cut its way from Yelverton through the banks of snow that blocked the permanent way. So cold was it that the water in the tank of one of the engines froze, and the locomotive was reversed to Yelverton, an operation that occupied two hours. The following day another attempt was made, with three engines pulling and a gang of thirty men supplementing their work with pick and shovel. At one point it took four hours to dig through two hundred feet of snow, piled to a depth of twelve feet. It was arduous work, but success was achieved, and the train reached Princetown, which had been cut off for four days.

## CHAPTER X

### ESCAPES : THE MAN HUNT

**I** WONDER why a man hunt has such an extraordinary fascination for the public, and why, no matter what the record of the hunted, the sympathies of the man-in-the-street, and even of the present day young-woman-of-the-world, are with him. I suppose the answer is that the ingrained sportsmanship of the English man and woman impels them to side with the fugitive against whom there are great odds. I can recall a number of escapes from Dartmoor, and, especially when a man has given his pursuers a good run, the feeling expressed can be summed up in the phrase, "I had hoped the poor beggar would have eluded capture."

To the stickler for law and order this, of course, is rank heresy, and I state it not by way of palliation of escape, but as a psychological fact that one cannot ignore. Some people argue that it is due to newspaper stunting, but I cannot agree, because years before the popular papers indulged in ribbon lines, double columns tops, and the emphasis of black type, and when descriptions of convict hunts were written in much more sober style than they are to-day, the story of the escape of a convict and his success or failure in evading the officers on his track, was read with the same avidity and the same sentiment and sympathy for the man who had broken from his prison, as are shown to-day.

## THE MAN HUNT

I suppose, too, there is a touch of romance about the man who takes his life in his hands by dashing away from armed guards into a curtain of dense fog, wandering over the rugged moor, risking the danger of stumbling into and being sucked down a bottomless bog, and breaking into dwellings in order to obtain food and clothes.

Often the fog, which, in covering his escape, seems to be the prisoner's best friend, proves to be a treacherous enemy, for just as it prevents his pursuers from tracking him, so also it destroys in him all sense of direction. So, after wandering all night, he finds, at daybreak, that he has been moving in a circle, and instead of being miles away from the prison, as he had imagined, he is under its very walls.

The fog is Dartmoor's peculiarity. At its worst it is as dense as a London fog, but with this difference : instead of being a smoky yellow pall, covering everybody and everything with dirt, it is of a white, clean, soaking nature, saturating one's clothes and forming a curtain through which it is possible to see no more than a yard or two. That is the reason why, when there has been an escape, a search over the moor is not begun immediately, but instead officers are thrown out along each road from Princetown, the guards at cross-roads being especially strong. In this way a cordon is formed through which it is difficult for any one to break, though it is by no means impregnable.

A Dartmoor mist is another of Nature's curtains for convicts attempting to escape. Differing from the fogs I have just described, the mist falls suddenly and rises with equal rapidity. People accustomed to tramp Dartmoor have had the same experience as I of these mists. On a humid day I have sat on the top of a tor and seen the mist fall and rise like the drop scene in a theatre. One minute the whole scene is blotted out. The next an unseen hand seems slowly

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to draw up the curtain, revealing the moor swept by fleeting sunrays and shadows.

At other times, the mist falls with equal suddenness but hangs over the earth for longer periods. It then provides the adventurous convict with the opportunity, for which he has been waiting, to make a dash for freedom, should he be in a working party which has not been hurried back to the prison. The possibilities of pursuit and recapture in this case are greater than when the moor is wrapped in winter fog, because the mist may rise at any moment and enable officers and civilians to conduct a drive over the moor and round up their man. An example of this will be given later.

The difficulties of a complete getaway have increased since the earliest period of Dartmoor's history as a convict prison, when escapes were both frequent and successful. The telephone and the motor-car provide obstacles which all the ingenuity of the fugitive cannot defeat. Following the mutiny, it was suggested that collusion between convicts and confederates outside was possible, and that arrangements for the provision of high-powered cars to enable men to get away were feasible. Personally, I feel that the practicability of such co-operation is remote. It connotes foreknowledge of the fall of a friendly fog, of both the opportunity and facilities for escape, and of a waiting car at the psychological moment.

I think the testimony of ex-convicts who sold stories to the newspapers at the time of the riot corroborates this opinion. All of them discounted the statements published of planned attempts at rescue from outside, which were to be facilitated by high-powered cars being held in readiness in the vicinity of the prison. They are of opinion, if there was anything at all in the tales of such cars being in the neighbourhood, that they were there only for

## THE MAN HUNT

the purpose of dropping parcels of tobacco and other things, including money, near the quarry or other place of outdoor employment, in the hope that they would reach prisoners. This theory seems reasonable from the fact that at the prison entrance is posted, among extracts from prison regulations, a notice which shows that the Prison Commissioners regard such a thing as something more than a possibility. It runs :

" Any free person finding money or articles, forbidden to prisoners, about the prison or works, which there is reason to believe have been placed there for an unlawful purpose, is directed to bring the same to the Governor, and such person will be eligible to receive the whole or part of such money or articles, provided he or they are free from suspicion or connivance in the intended malpractice ; any person convicted of or conniving in such practice will be liable to summary punishment."

There are quite recent cases of prisoners conquering the difficulties of the moor only to walk into the trap that Plymouth or Exeter provides. The majority of fugitives, all through the history of Dartmoor as a penal establishment, have made for Plymouth, partly because it offers the most promising road, and partly because they hope there to be lost in the big population sufficiently long to enable them to board and conceal themselves in a goods train in which to reach London or one of the big industrial centres. Only rarely has this come off. Usually they find themselves in a cul-de-sac from which they can engineer no outlet, Plymouth being so nearly encircled by water as to be almost an island.

From the outset the escaped prisoner is handicapped by his prison garb, which, though not now bearing the old-time broad arrow, there is no mis-

## DARTMOOR PRISON

taking. His first job, therefore, is to obtain civilian clothes, and he does it by breaking into some dwelling under the friendly pall of darkness, and stealing them, as well as food, and, if possible, money, or that which can later be turned into money.

That is why, when the prison bell, or now the syren, has sounded the alarm, and thereby broadcast the news that a prisoner has escaped, every occupied house on the moor is lit up at night. It is the signal to the fugitive that the occupants are on the alert. He, therefore, selects a house that is in darkness, in the expectation that the owner is away, or has retired to rest without knowledge that he is at large.

A story is told of two convicts who broke into the dining-room of a gentleman's house and found it to be a place flowing with what to them was better than milk and honey. Spread before them were the remains of a liberal supper—ham, turkey, cheese, sweets, and wine. But alas, when, having dined well, they left the house, they walked into the arms of prison officials and were haled back to prison. There the chaplain, noticing that one was depressed, asked if he had anything on his conscience.

"I shall never forgive myself," was the reply, "for not having another slice of that turkey."

When there is an escape the general body of convicts are confined in the prison and their cells, because all the officers possible are engaged in the search for the fugitive. The men, especially those normally employed in outdoor occupations, dislike this, but know it will continue as long as their missing comrade is at large in the neighbourhood. The escapes of 1931 occurred on a Friday. The following morning, at the usual Saturday service, one of the hymns was, "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," and ap-

## THE MAN HUNT

parently the prisoners saw in this an entertaining coincidence, for the lines :

“ He comes to break oppression  
And set the captive free,”

were sung with marked emphasis, and punctuated with not a few covert smiles.

Though the broad arrow as a distinguishing mark on convicts' clothes has been discarded, it is retained in the soles of their boots, where it is formed with hobnails. This boot symbol was known to an old lady living in a lonely part of the moor when she was visited by officers in search of an escaped prisoner. Near her cottage the officers saw the prints of broad arrows in the soft ground, and, it is said, thought these were left by the boots of their man. But while they were following the trail a flock of geese came waddling back from a foraging expedition on the moor, leaving in the mud further impressions of their webbed feet, which the old lady chaffingly told the officers were counterfeit “ broad arrows ”!

The first escape was in December of 1850, within a month of the opening of the prison for the reception of convicts. Three men, John Broderick, John Thompson, and Charles Webster, who were in D ward, ripped up the floor and, getting into the basement, forced a door into the yard, and using a plank scaled the boundary wall. Four days later Thompson and Broderick were recaptured in the neighbourhood of Ashburton. Webster was never found, so, as far as he was concerned, the first escape succeeded. The trio had reached Plymouth, whence they made their way towards Ashburton, and when Thomson and Broderick were taken they were ravenously hungry.

The number of escapes during the first decade or so now seems incredible. Indeed, at one time, it

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was so great that Sir Basil Thomson, who was able to confirm the fact from documents in existence, states in his *Story of Dartmoor* that the authorities ceased to keep records, and even refused to accept prisoners who were conveyed back to the prison when recaptured. The police were thus obliged to keep the men in custody until they were brought before the local magistrates, who sent them to gaol or to the Assizes for trial for offences they had committed while at large.

In February 1851, Gordon Taylor escaped from the barracks, where he was engaged in painting. He also made for Plymouth, where he was recaptured by the police. Two months later John Jones and John Cotton got away, and four days after gaining their freedom committed highway robbery. They were never retaken. John Bell, engaged on repair work at the vicarage when he escaped, was recaptured at Exeter.

A convict named Hartley, while with a working party, eluded the vigilance of the guard, but the out-buildings of a farm at Whitchurch was not a good hiding-place, nor the farmer to whom they belonged the kind of man to allow a convict to be at large. Farmer Dodd seized him and walked him back to the prison, receiving a reward of £5. Thomas Clutch must have been as attenuated and as slippery as an eel, for it is recorded of him that he squeezed himself between the bars of a window on the ground floor of No. 3 Prison, and then climbed the boundary wall. After such feats he deserved to escape !

There were excursionists even in those days who visited Princetown, as much to see the prison as to enjoy their annual "wayzgoose," and while the soldiers were keeping crowds of inquisitive sightseers clear of the prison entrance and preventing them from interfering with the prisoners passing out to their

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usual occupations, two convicts, Baker and Griffiths, broke through a defective wall in the piggery and got away. Their freedom was short-lived, for they were retaken the same evening and marched back to the prison. The penalty of confinement in the separate cells stimulated rather than cooled their desire for freedom in defiance of prison law and authority, for after the lapse of three months they escaped a second time, but Plymouth provided no sanctuary for them. The police laid hands on them and sent them whence they came.

There is nothing like effrontery in desperate efforts of this kind, but William French had to pay the penalty for his when he walked out through the main entrance wearing clothes provided by a workman, for he was recaptured at Newton Abbot and prosecuted by the police for prison breaking.

In November of 1852 a convict named Barrow disappeared from the gasworks. Persistent search failed to unearth him, and it was thought he had got away by climbing the chimney stack, and presumably climbing down again! Two days later the night officer's quarters were burgled and clothes stolen. From this it was deduced that the man must have secreted himself somewhere in the prison—evidently not up the chimney stack—and, having obtained clothes, left the premises unperceived. Later, certain of the stolen garments were pawned in Plymouth, but the enterprising gentleman completed the disappearing trick so effectively that he was never retaken.

While a party of one hundred convicts were engaged, following the blizzard of February 1853, in cutting a track through the snow to Merrivale to enable the meat wagons to reach the prison, one man escaped but was recaptured, almost frozen to death, the following day by a farmer.

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In July of 1854, John Smith had the audacity to creep along the beams of the roof of the hall in which the warders were at supper, without attracting attention. He slipped into the yard and then climbed over the wall, and his next move was to break into the medical officer's house. There he possessed himself of a suit of clothes, and on the principle that exchange is no robbery, left his convict garb behind.

"My kingdom for a horse," he muttered, as he entered the doctor's stables. There he found the horse, and as the only kingdom he had any title to was behind the wall he had so recently climbed, he left it, with his blessing, to the doctor, and rode off bare-backed, as he could not get into the harness-room for saddle and bridle. Still it was not the first time he had ridden barebacked, and he managed quite well with a halter.

At Two Bridges he had just passed the inn when a moorman left it and, mounting his pony, jogged homeward. With the usual Dartmoor sociability, he overtook the barebacked rider, and after an unconventional personal introduction inquired as to his identity.

"I'm the new curate going the round of my pastoral duties," replied the stranger, but, noting that he was riding without saddle or bridle, and that his clothes were anything but clerical in cut and fit, the moorman was sceptical.

Suddenly it dawned on him that the stranger was mounted on the doctor's horse. "It's the doctor's," he exclaimed, whereupon the convict dug his heels into the sides of his mount and galloped away, with the moorman, now thoroughly roused, after him. The stranger's bigger horse seemed like out-distancing the pony, when the moorman remembered that the doctor's mount was an old charger.

"Halt," he roared, and immediately the animal

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obeyed the still remembered word of command, and, stopping suddenly, shot his rider over his head. Before the latter could recover, the moorman galloped up, and pouncing upon him, exclaimed, " You're a five-pounder to me, my reverend party."

The moorman duly got £5 for his capture, and the convict seven years' penal servitude for the theft of the horse and clothes, in addition to having to serve the balance of his original sentence !

One of the successful escapes was that of a convict who concealed himself in a mine. By telling them he also was a mine worker, he won the sympathy of the miners, and they concealed him until the search for him was abandoned. Then they provided him with a suit of old clothes and such money as they were able to scrape together to assist him to leave the country. He went to the colonies, made good, and a year or two later sent back to the miners the money they had given him, with a substantial addition as an earnest of his gratitude.

Another convict was not so fortunate. When he escaped he made for his home, believing that that would be the last place in which the authorities would expect to find him, especially as it was not a great many miles from Princetown. But he reckoned without his wife. She had no use for one who had become an incorrigible rogue, and she gave him up to the police. She claimed the £5 reward, and it is said got it !

In August of 1854 John Grey and John Taylor broke away from a party engaged in operations on bog land. Grey reached Southmolton, where he broke into a farm and stole a suit of clothes, leaving his convict uniform behind. His also was a completely successful getaway, for he was never retaken. His comrade, Taylor, was caught in Plymouth.

In December, a man named Warburton made a

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dash for the open moor while engaged with a working party. There was no friendly curtain of fog, and he was "winged" in the thigh with a shot from a rifle. A similar fate befel James Cooper, who, in May 1856, also broke from a working party and made a desperate burst for the open moor. He fell shot in the back.

Having, with an ingenuity worthy of a better task, made a cell key from beef-bones, James Lake one August day of the same year unlocked his door from the outside by tying the key to a stick. Having thus secured his own liberation he also released a comrade. The pair then attacked and disarmed the patrol, and seized his bayonet. The officer, however, raised the alarm, and his colleagues promptly responding to his summons, overpowered the two daring criminals and clapped them into cells where bone keys were of no avail.

In January of 1857 a party of convicts were being conveyed to Princetown from Plymouth, when they mutinied. Two of them succeeded in smashing their handcuffs and jumping from the train. They made good their escape, and were never recaptured.

In 1860, a number of juvenile convicts arrived from Parkhurst, and two, named Ball and Robinson, neither of whom was more than twelve years of age, together with an older convict, cut through the bar of the window in one of the wards of the infirmary and escaped. They were never retaken. The precocity of these boys seems to demonstrate that the system of dealing with young criminals in those days was not successful in preventing them from continuing in a career of crime, or in preventing youth from engaging in it.

There is now a tendency to place the cause of much of the crime of to-day at the door of the Borstal

## THE MAN HUNT

Institution, by emphasizing a few failures and ignoring the far greater number of successes. But much has been learned and gained since the days when boys were sentenced to penal servitude in a prison like Dartmoor.

## CHAPTER XI

### ESCAPES : ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY

A N escape of four men from the quarry on May 4, 1864, afforded an opportunity to the Governor's coachman of distinguishing himself, and within a month he cut short the spell of liberty stolen by another convict, who got away during a fog. The coachman's name was William Downing, and at the time he was by way of being a hero. Subsequently he left the Governor's service and became a cabman at Torquay, and was one day induced to tell the story of his exploits as a hunter of convicts.

"I was standing not far from the entrance to the prison talking to the Chief Warder," he said. "We were facing the quarry, where a gang of convicts were at work. Suddenly we both saw several men darting about above the quarry as though trying to hide. We ran off to the quarry, where the Chief Warder asked the man in charge of the gang whether all was right. The reply was 'yes,' whereupon the Chief Warder said, 'I'm afraid not; you had better call your men in.' When that was done there were four men missing, and it was evident that they had got clear away.

"I ran back to the stables and saddled a horse, and galloped away in the direction I thought the men would take—along the Plymouth road. About a mile from Devil's Bridge I met a man who said he

had seen four men running in a direction he indicated. Telling the man to inform any of the warders who were out 'searching' for the runaways, I rode towards Peak Tor plantation, where I suspected the men would be hiding.

"A couple of boys who had been bird-nesting told me they had heard men talking in the woods. I was then pretty certain I had found my men, but knew that I should get a cracked skull if I ventured into the wood single-handed. I therefore took up a position where I could command the whole plantation, and presently I saw one man jump over the hedge, apparently to see if the coast was clear. He was joined by the other three, and the whole group then moved off towards Sheepstor. Sighting a group of cottages, however, they were afraid to proceed, and hid under a bank between some fields, where they also commanded a good view in various directions.

"I induced a man who came along to hurry to Princetown and inform the officials. On the way he met four warders, who hastened to the spot. They were reinforced by a party of seven peat-cutters, who, having heard that convicts had escaped, came scrambling down across the moors, with Mr. Rowe of the Duchy Hotel. Outnumbered, the convicts apparently decided to make a bolt for it, but when they tumbled out of their hiding-place, the principal warden shouted, 'Stand, or we will shoot!' Cowed by this threat, they surrendered, and were marched back to prison."

And that was how William won the battle of Peak Tor!

But to Part Two of the story. "Just a month from that very day," said William, "another man escaped, and I was the means of capturing him. This fellow had been on the works only a couple of days when he managed with great artfulness to escape.

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The convicts were supplied with several different kinds of dress, one of which, a blue coat, was the distinctive mark of the good-conduct man. If it had also a red collar, the wearer was allowed certain privileges, including the liberty to pass the guard to fetch water, and so on.

"The convict of whom I am speaking wore a drab suit (the lowest), but managed to obtain a blue coat belonging to another prisoner. Then with some brick dust he reddened the collar, and wearing this coat, and carrying a pail, he walked boldly past the guard who took him for a 'privilege' man, fetching water. So cleverly did he manage his make-up that he was never challenged, and once out of sight he did not return.

"When the man's flight was discovered, the Governor ordered me to go in search of him, and, mounting a horse, I rode up the valley towards Great Mistor. There, following a search, I saw the prisoner hiding between some rocks. He was a big, powerful fellow; and riding after a shepherd who was crossing the hilltop, I got him to return with me.

"Although the convict had moved to another hiding-place, we found him, whereupon he coolly remarked, 'I suppose I'm the man you're looking for?' I told him he was, and he then said, 'Well, I've run all the way up here; let me have your horse to ride back!'

"I inquired if he saw any green in my eye, and assured him that if he came back quietly I would give him a pint of beer at Merrivale Bridge Inn. My bait was no more successful than his had been, but I had kept him long enough for the civil guard to arrive, and their persuasions were much more effective than mine: he was soon back, where a closer watch was kept on him."

While a young Londoner, Charles Ross, was

serving a sentence of seven years' penal servitude for robbery with violence, he was engaged in tending cattle at the farm. Always having in mind the possibility of escape, he waited patiently for a promising day, when, under cover of a falling mist, he stole away. He was not missed for some time, and taking full advantage of such cover as offered itself, he eventually got into the main road at Horrabridge. Presently he met a party of gipsies driving a horsed caravan, loaded with the usual wares of the travelling gipsy. The horses were led by a young girl to whom he appealed. Her sympathies were touched and she succeeded in inducing her father to befriend Ross, who was taken into the caravan, where he changed the garb of a convict for that of a Romany.

With Ross leading the horses with one hand, and carrying a broom in the other, the party worked their way to Princetown, where all was excitement over the escape of a convict, but though search was made in all directions no one suspected the young "gipsy" of being the wanted man, and after plying their trade in Princetown and neighbourhood, the party passed on to Plymouth. Here Ross obtained employment in a ship, and went to sea. Several years later he returned to meet his gipsy lass at Bristol, and married her. The couple settled down in the Midlands, where, to complete this little romance, they "lived happily ever after."

When, in 1881, the tunnel, begun but never completed by the American prisoners of war, was discovered, the news spread among the prisoners in the mysterious ways known only to themselves. Stimulated by the possibilities he thought it revealed, the man whose cell was situated above it tried to reach the entrance by digging through the cement floor with a tool usually used for fixing gaspipes. In any event, his labour would have been abortive, because the

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shaft was still closed with the great blocks of granite thrown in by Captain Shortland. But before he had opportunity of meeting this disappointment in actual experience, his operations were discovered ; and so was the fact that he had made himself a suit of clothes with a piece of cloth he had stolen when at work in the tailor's shop. This man was serving a sentence of ten years' penal servitude, and his ill-fated enterprise destroyed any chance he had of earning the usual remission of two and a half years off that term.

On November 7, 1881, a prisoner named Scott made a daring attempt to escape. He was one of a working party from which he broke away under cover of fog that had fallen. As he leapt the boundary wall several shots were fired at him, but not one reached its mark. Scott eluded his pursuers, but the fog that had befriended him at the start later became his greatest difficulty, and though he wandered over a considerable area he really did not get far away. Prison officers and police, aided by civilians, scoured the district, and during the night found Scott hiding in a haystack. In his possession was a piece of iron with which, he confessed, he had intended to break into a house that he had marked while working with gangs on the prison farm.

"When I escaped," he said, "I made, as I thought, right across the moor, but the fog was so dense that I appear to have walked round and round. I know I passed one place twice in my wanderings."

Scott was said to be a native of a village within a few miles of Plymouth, and was a noted runner. "When I am again at liberty," he boasted, "I shall continue to be a burglar, for with no work and no one willing to employ him, what else can a burglar do ? "

## ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY

One of the most tragic escapes from Dartmoor occurred on Christmas Eve, 1896. A gang of convicts was working on the farm when, fog falling, the order was given for the men to return to the prison. Flinging down their tools and throwing earth in the eyes of the nearest warders, three of them ran away. Disregarding the order to halt, under penalty of being fired on, they climbed a hedge. At the same moment reports of the guards' Winchesters rang out, and one man, William Carter, serving sentence for burglary, fell shot through the heart. The second, not hit, took cover behind a bush, and seized a piece of granite with which he threatened an officer who approached him. The officer, however, struck him down with his baton, and the man, unconscious, was carried to the hospital.

The third convict, Ralph Goodwin, got away, and trudging through the long hours of the night thought he had put many miles between himself and the prison. But dawn broke and looming up before him were the frowning walls of the prison. As other men had done, he had wandered in a circle : the fog had beaten him, or, as old-fashioned Devon folk would have it, he had been "pisky-laid"; that is, a spell had been laid upon him by the pixies, or the "little people."

But read his own story of the night, and the shock he experienced in the morning : "When I felt I was beyond reach of rifles I fled like a hare," he said. "I could not see a yard ahead of me, but on and on I ran. It was a fearful day, and the rain fell in torrents. The fog was so thick you could cut it with a knife, and every now and then I found myself up to my knees, and sometimes up to my waist, in bogs. When I reached anything like solid ground I started again, and kept it up all through the night.

"I must have gone thirty miles from the time I

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started when morning broke, and I sat down to take stock. I made out some houses and quite thought I was well on the way to Plymouth. When it grew lighter I moved towards the place, and then you may judge my feelings when I could make out the outlines of the prison I had left ! I was actually seen by one or two of the villagers, because I was walking along the road quite unconscious that the place was Princetown, and I suppose they didn't notice me particularly, because Princetown was the last spot in the world where they would have expected to find me.

" I was in despair and half inclined, in my destitute circumstances, to give myself up. Then the warders began to pop up here and there, and I thought that if they saw me they would shoot me. So I determined to have another dash for it, and clambered up the side of a tremendous tor, as determined as though I had only just started. It was awful work getting up, and I could see the guards spotted me as I neared the summit, for they made off in my direction.

" If it was an awful climb up, it was terrible getting down on the other side. The tor was almost perpendicular. I could not walk ; I could only roll down, sometimes coming into contact with boulders and giving myself a frightful shaking. How I reached the bottom I don't know ; but I did. And then I scuttled across country at top speed, leaping hedges, tearing my hands with brambles, and having an awful time of it. I scarcely looked round until I had put six miles between myself and that tor, and then over the open country I could see warders looking at me through their field glasses from the top. The sky was beautifully clear that Christmas morning, and the reflection of the glasses glistened in the sun. I felt so triumphant at beating the crowd that I

took off my hat and waved it at them in defiance."

Goodwin, who told this story after his recapture, went on to describe how in crossing a river he was nearly swept off his feet, having scarcely the strength to resist the current. He got across, and kept going until nightfall. With his knowledge as a sailor to assist him, he felt, when the moon rose, that if he followed the course it gave him, he would reach Plymouth. That night he broke into two houses at Postbridge, where he obtained a coat, a hat, and pair of boots. The boots were small and caused great discomfort. However, Goodwin made his way to Tavistock, where he burgled a villa, entering by the garden at back, where he found a pair of shears with which to force the kitchen window.

"There were rather a lot of things in the larder," he said, "the remains of a large turkey, two plum puddings, and other things. I made a grand meal before I left, and took the other things in my pockets. Unfortunately for me, the chase became hot again, and I had to throw the puddings away and the greater part of the turkey. I was vexed that it should have to be wasted, but I could not run whilst loaded. Later, I struck a railway and met several packers, who ordered me off. One asked me what I was doing on the line. I told him that I had made a bet of £5 to walk from Tavistock to Plymouth by the railway line. He looked as if he didn't believe me, but let me pass, and I proceeded until I reached Devonport. I had collared a big pair of boots at Tavistock but I could not find a pair of trousers, and I was afraid these yellow ones (he was still wearing his prison bags) would give me away."

At Devonport, Goodwin, according to his own story, boldly walked into a club or hotel, which was lit up, and startled the servants. He left hurriedly

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and entered another house, where he got some food. Later, he was walking along the road near the Royal Naval Barracks, where he saw a police-constable who had a dog with him. The constable wished him "Good morning," and Goodwin replied with the same courtesy. He passed on, and the dog, in playful mood, ran after him. Goodwin heard Dash's rush, and thinking the constable had recognized him and was following to tackle him, he started to run. That was enough for Robert, who immediately scenting, if not a convict, at all events a man with a guilty conscience, gave chase.

Footsore and weary, Goodwin was not in condition to give him a long run, and after a sprint of a couple of hundred yards, he turned at bay and threatened the constable with a knife which he had stolen at Postbridge. The policeman was equal to him, however, for he pretended so realistically to draw a revolver that the convict was deceived.

In response to his threat, "If you attempt to touch me I will knife you," the constable gave the warning, "If you do I will shoot you down." Goodwin thereupon threw away his knife, was arrested, and later taken back to Princetown, where he completed his sentence. He then went to South Africa, and after working for several years as an engineer, died in Capetown.

On January 2, 1898, William Morgan, undergoing sentence of ten years' penal servitude, escaped from No. 5 Prison. He had obtained possession of a sledge-hammer without handle or shaft, and succeeded in carrying it to his cell, where he secreted it. In the evening he used this tool to smash the cast-iron framework of the window, synchronizing each stroke with the slamming of the doors as officers proceeded on their rounds of the cells. Having made an opening, he took off his clothes, threw them out, squeezed

*Associated Press*

MOTORISTS HELD UP ON DARTMOUTH BY POLICE AND PRISON OFFICERS FOR EXAMINATION DURING SEARCH FOR ESCAPED CONVICTS.





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through the shattered framework, and, using a rope made of the sheets of his bed, lowered himself to the ground. He cut himself badly in the jagged framework, but with extraordinary stoicism proceeded to complete his escape by scaling the prison wall with the aid of a pole, which he raised against it.

Morgan raced away with a quarter of an hour's start of the officers who went in search of him. He quickly got clear of Princetown, and struck out towards Ashburton, where later he tried to break into a house, but failed. Then he tramped along Tavistock road until he discovered that he was travelling in the wrong direction. He, therefore, took to the moor, and in the morning was in hiding near Scorhill when seen by a hind named Perryman, who had been rabbit-shooting.

Realizing he was seen, Morgan, without coat and cap, started to run. Mr. Perryman sent his dog after him, and, hailing another moorman in the distance, borrowed his horse and went in pursuit of the fugitive. The dog was first up and held Morgan by the breeches until its master, reaching the spot, told Morgan that if he attempted to run farther he would shoot him.

"I do not believe your gun is loaded," retorted Morgan.

"Proof of that lies in this cartridge," remarked Mr. Perryman, as he displayed it. That was sufficient for Morgan: he submitted quietly, and walked to Scorhill with Mr. Perryman, still mounted, ambling behind him and carrying the gun under his arm ready for use at any moment.

Morgan was marched into the house at Scorhill and given a meal of bread and cheese and a pint of milk, and thus reinvigorated, was considered fit for a further walk to Chagford, with Mr. Perryman,

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gun under arm, following him until he was safely in the custody of the police.

Morgan, who had two nights' liberty, declared that no single man unarmed would have caught him. He had planned to remain hidden in Scorhill plantation until nightfall, and then to break into the house for food and clothing.

"When I had broken clear of Princetown," he said, "I made for a house I had marked on the Tavistock road, between Rundlestone and Two Bridges, with the intention of breaking into it, but the lights convinced me that the hazard would be too great, and the barking of dogs confirmed this. I went on my way, and once had to lie low because some prison officers passed close to me."

Morgan had previously broken out of prison at Parkhurst, but after a short run was captured.

Prisoners employed in the fields on November 1, 1901, heard the shrill signal of an officer's whistle to cease work and fall in for their return to prison, because a fog had suddenly fallen. Two bolted across the field in which they had been hoeing turnips and disregarded an officer's call to them to stop. The officer levelled his rifle and fired, one of the men, C—, dropping with a shot (later extracted) in the eye. The other man, Y—, raced away. The confusion caused was the signal for five other convicts to break away, but the officer, having reloaded, jumped the fence to intercept two of them, threatening to shoot them if they did not surrender. The pointed muzzle of the rifle cowed them, and they submitted. The remaining three men were captured by other officers who had come on the scene.

Y— had practically a twenty-four hours' run, being captured the following day by Mr. Yeo, of Baggtor Farm, Petertavy, one of whose sons, going into a field to attend a sick turkey, was curious as to

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the cause of the growling of his dog, which accompanied him. As soon as Mr. Yeo, jun., began to search the edge of the adjoining plantation the escaped convict bolted from it, with the dog after him. The insistent trill of a whistle brought out Mr. Yeo, sen., and two other sons, and they joined in the chase of the running convict.

Y—, however, was too fatigued to keep up the pace, and, pulling up, made overtures to Mr. Yeo that he should be given a coat and allowed to go on his way.

"No," replied Mr. Yeo, "I will give you what you like to eat and drink, but you will stay here to-night, and to-morrow I will take you back to Princetown."

Mr. Yeo kept his word, and as far as I have been able to discover, he provides the only record of a man who has voluntarily acted as host to a convict for a night—and, be it noted, custodian as well. He provided Y— with a good meal, and locked him in a room where he passed a comfortable night, gave him breakfast in the morning, and then handed him over to the civil guard, who had been summoned. Within an hour or two he was again within the prison walls.

"When I escaped from the field in which I had been working," said Y—, "I walked and walked until I believed I had covered quite ten miles. Then I discovered that, pushing on more or less blindly in the fog, I had been travelling in a circle, and was only about three miles from the prison. I hid all that day in the plantation, and intended to break into the house to obtain both food and clothes when the occupants had gone to bed. Mr. Yeo's dog upset my plans, and sent me back to prison."

The seven men who tried to escape were not identical with the gang from which Y— and his

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companion broke. There were five gangs, with a total strength of 110 convicts at work in the same area, with 16 officers as supervisors and guards, and the three sets of men who attempted to get away belonged to different gangs.

## CHAPTER XII

ESCAPES : FOOD THE PRIZE—SILVER THE DROSS

**T**WO features of escapes in 1907 and 1908 were the youth of the men concerned, and the fact that when one of them made his second breakaway he was within three or four weeks of completing the sentence he was serving. Having only just passed into the twenties, each was classified "Y.P.," that is Young Prisoner, a classification that long ago disappeared from Dartmoor.

A——P—— was only twenty-one when, with another prisoner, T——E——, he broke away from a quarry party in which he had been included. The couple chose one of the worst periods of the year for an effort to defeat the stern rigours of Dartmoor, for heavy rain had been falling for several days, the low-lying land was water-logged, the rivers were swollen, and failure was inevitable. They were out for about thirty hours, and then, drenched, peat-begrimed, hungry, and exhausted, they sought shelter during the night in one of the barns of a farm at Postbridge, about seven miles from Princetown.

In the morning, the farmer, throwing open the door of the barn to obtain the implements he needed, was astonished when two bedraggled and stockingless men (they had got rid of their boots) walked out. They were in neither mood nor condition to offer resistance, and when the kindly farmer had fed them,

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were taken back to the prison by officers who had been summoned.

On being told that during their thirty hours' wandering they had reached no farther than seven miles from their hated prison, they could not believe it.

The penalty the couple had to pay was six weeks' solitary confinement on bread and water diet, and for a period each had to wear the degrading yellow garb and chains. The suggested severity of the punishment was the subject of questions in the House of Commons, and in reply, the Home Secretary said in his view it was not excessive, especially as the attempt to escape was "almost successful."

It is impossible to understand the mentality of a man who, with only three or four weeks of a sentence of three and a half years to run, was prepared to take risks of a further term of imprisonment by making another bid for the freedom which would so shortly become his by right. A—— P——'s explanation was that from the hour he entered Dartmoor he made up his mind to escape, and, realizing that his only chance lay with men engaged in work outside the prison, he asked to be included in the farm party. His request was granted, surprisingly, because of his previous escape, and he was warned against making another attempt. Thus, one morning, he found himself in charge of a horse and cart drawing stone from the quarry.

On his second day as horseman a heavy fog hung over the moors, and instead of being assigned to their usual work, the men were engaged in horse-clipping in the stable yard. P—— thought the conditions were favourable, but realized that there was only one way out and that past the guard—unless he could find another. He took a fellow prisoner, W——, into his confidence, and told him that in a certain place he would find two bars of sharpened steel. With these

## FOOD THE PRIZE

he hoped to force out one of the windows in the loose box.

W— found the bars of steel, but his attempt to use them on the window failed, and P— determined to try himself. Climbing on the manger, he placed a bar on each side of the window, and then gradually threw the whole weight of his body against the two wedges. A crack, and the window frame fell out. P— got through and jumped, just as the stable door opened. He turned and saw framed in the window, not an officer, as he expected, but another young convict. Telling him to inform W— that he had gone, P— dashed away, taking such cover as offered, and fearing all the time that the armed guard on the look-out tower would see him and fire, for by this time the fog had partially lifted.

Crawling from bush to bush of heather and gorse, he reached a wall of granite boulders and followed it towards the Two Bridges road. After he had covered some distance he took off his boots, in the soles of which was the hated broad arrow, leaving an unmistakable trail in the soft ground. While he was doing this, W— came up, having received P—'s message from the young convict who saw the escape, and followed through the broken window.

W— removed his footwear, the boots of both were concealed, and the couple, having pulled a few turnips for food, set off on a most painful trudge over the moorland. Presently they reached bogland, and had to jump from tuft to tuft, and finally to wriggle on their stomachs to reach firm ground, for on attempting to walk they found themselves sinking knee-deep in the bog.

On the other side they saw tracks of a pony, and with the thought that one of the "cowboy pony guards" (mounted officers) was near, they turned and hid in the heather until the friendly pall of night

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covered them. Then they stumbled on until they reached a farmstead, which they planned to enter, but were scared off by footsteps they believed to be an officer's. They wandered on and on without much sense of direction until they blundered upon the military camp near Okehampton.

They had been heard, for out of the darkness came the challenge, "Who goes there?" The sentry got no reply, for P—— and W—— bolted as swiftly and silently as their bare feet allowed, and did not stop running until they had satisfied themselves that there was no sign of pursuit.

The noise of a passing train now revealed to them what they were seeking: the situation of the railway. They struck the line and followed it to the station, which was still lit up. They hid themselves, with the intention of breaking in and stealing clothes, but their enterprise was unrewarded, for they found none.

When they left the prison they each wore a pair of trousers, a pair of pants, shirt and undervest, stockings, boots, and leggings. Hats, coats, and vests were left behind, and leggings were thrown away when they discarded their boots. Their legs were bare from the knees downwards, they were wet to the skin from crossing small rivers, and black as niggers through crawling on hands and knees over bogland.

The next move of the adventurers was to reconnoitre and attempt to break into a house near Okehampton Station. They failed, because when the sash of the window had been twisted out, W—— slipped and broke a pane of glass, and, fearing the noise would be heard, they hurried away. They next inspected a row of houses, and selected one, the pantry window of which was open. W—— squeezed through, and then, opening the back door, admitted P——. It proved to be the curate's house, and although there

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was a substantial quantity of silver plate offering temptation, it had no interest for them, a more important find being a well-stocked larder.

Appropriating the cover of a cushion they filled it with roast turkey, a round of beef, loaves, tarts, cakes, butter, and cheese. They also took candles and matches, and two dinner knives. With this precious load and a stock of clothes they left, the occupants of the house sleeping blissfully unconscious of how they were being robbed.

On reaching cover, where they were able to conceal their movements, they got into the stolen clothes and buried their prison garb. They remained during the day hidden in a tangled mass of bushes in a field adjacent to a farmhouse, and dined generously on roast turkey and beef, bread and cheese, and fresh butter. They took turns in sleeping, and at one time heard officers searching for them. They did not attempt to get a view of the searchers because they were taking no risks.

At night they resumed their wanderings, their first job being to find water to slake the thirst that was troubling them. They made what they thought was a circle of Okehampton with the object of throwing their pursuers off the scent, only to find themselves back at the artillery camp.

They again got away and reached the river Okement, which they crossed. W— passed over without a wetting, but P— slipped and was swept downstream until he struck the bank at a bend and scrambled out.

The men reached the main road, and at one point, passing a homeward-bound railwayman, wished him "Good-night." Later, they saw four men leave an inn and enter a car. They were prison officers. A man with two dogs spoke to them, remarking on the fine night. He took the high road and they took the

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low road, because they did not want too much of his company !

W— had been suffering from sore feet caused by the curate's tight boots pinching his toes. They decided to burgle the inn, though at first P— was averse from taking the risk. There W— obtained a comfortable pair of boots, and exchanged his clothes for a miner's cord suit. They also obtained a further supply of food, some money, and other things, the place being a combination of inn, post office, and outfitter's shop.

In moving about, however, they pushed over a chair, and the noise roused the occupants. Footsteps sounded in the room above and on the stairs, and they made a hurried exit.

Then W— committed a mistake that proved to be their undoing. He left the parson's coat on the window-sill, where something unusual caught the eye of the landlord when, after a cursory look round without seeing anything amiss, he was on the point of returning to bed. The coat revealed to him that he had had visitors, and further investigation determined him to telephone to the police at Moretonhampstead.

Meantime P— and W— had agreed that they had reached a stage of their adventure when it would be safer to part, and P— walked towards Whidden Down, a centre of traffic between Okehampton and Exeter. Here he saw two men whom he would have avoided had he known the sequel to the overcoat incident at the inn. But he thought it safe to pass them. They stopped and questioned him, and his replies being unconvincing they told him they were police officers and would arrest him on suspicion, as there had been a burglary in the neighbourhood. P— was taken to Moretonhampstead, where he was lodged in a cell of the police station.

According to his own story, published in the *Wide*

*World Magazine* a few years ago, during the next twenty-four hours he heard nothing about escaped convicts. Then through the trap in the door of the cell he heard a voice say, "Are you there, Alf?" and turning, saw the face of his fellow-runaway. The door opened, and there was W—, still wearing the miner's suit.

There was no need for question or denial as to identity. The run of the convicts, and the hunt for them, were at an end. The next day the pair appeared in the local police court, P— in clerical clothes and W— in the miner's suit. The latter was charged with burglariously entering the Union Inn, and also with P— with burglariously entering the curate's house at Okehampton.

Committed for trial at Devon Assizes, they were there each sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment with hard labour, to be served after the expiration of their terms of penal servitude. They were sent back to Dartmoor, where they were put into the parti-coloured dress and chains. When they had completed their sentences they were transferred to Exeter prison, and there served the additional twelve months!

One of the pleas advanced at the trial in mitigation of their offence was that when they broke into the curate's house they might have made their selection from about £400 or £500 worth of silver, including communion plate, but did not do so ; all they needed was food and clothes.

Another escape was that of a man who, after eluding all search for him on the moor, succeeded in gaining the railway. Reaching Marsh Mills, where the branch line joins the main line out of Plymouth, he found a goods train in a siding, and selecting a suitable truck, he crawled underneath the tarpaulin cover. Later the train steamed away, the railway

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officials being ignorant that they were conveying a passenger who had paid neither fare nor freightage.

The convict, however, was unlucky, for the train, instead of going east, ran west into Cornwall, and after spending an uncomfortable night, he found himself at Penzance, or rather the officials found him, pinned down by a piece of wood that had fallen on him in the course of the journey. It was a dispirited, bedraggled, and woebegone convict that the railwaymen released and handed over to the police, but he made the return to Princetown under conditions easier than those of his outward trip, though his depression at the failure of his expedition was natural.

On a sunny day in August of 1924, a company of twelve convicts were engaged in haymaking in a field on the prison farm. They had halted in their labours to have lunch, the distance being deemed to be greater than warranted a return to the prison for the usual midday meal. Suddenly, five of the prisoners burst away, scrambling over the walls and making for the open moor. While the remainder of the party were marched back to their cells, the alarm was sounded and officers and civilians went in pursuit of the fugitives.

The first report was that seven men tried to get away and that two were shot down. Later, however, it was stated officially that there had been no shooting. At the time there was a large number of visitors to Princetown and on the moor, and they had the unusual excitement of a convict hunt in brilliant sunshine. Men mounted on horseback, and others on foot, joined the prison officers in scouring the moor, while motor cyclists and pedal cyclists patrolled the roads. As the prisoners raced away they shed all the prison garb possible, and also got rid of their heavy boots which, studded with the broad arrows, would have left their impress where the ground was

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soft. But it was not long before they wished they had not done so, because granite, heather, and bracken provide anything but smooth going for tender feet. One man cast off even breeches and belt, and was later found clad only in his shirt.

Early in the afternoon a party of prison and police officers were searching the moor towards Nun's Cross, when a dog that accompanied them began to bark. Investigating the cause of the animal's excitement, they came upon one of the convicts crouching in a stream. Realizing that his hiding-place was discovered, he bolted, but ill-clad and bootless, he soon yielded to conditions that made running painful and dangerous, and fell well-nigh exhausted. The officers pounced on him, and a policeman ferreted out and recaptured the second of the fugitives, both being marched back to prison.

Meanwhile the drive continued in every direction, a ring having been established about five miles in circumference, and with officers and civilians riding ponies or on foot, it gradually closed in. About five o'clock, two of the fleeing men were seen near Hexworthy. The pursuers gave chase, and in the unequal conditions only one result was possible : the two prisoners were recaptured and taken back to Princetown, entry being made through the prison lands instead of from the public highway, where the number of sightseers had increased during the afternoon.

A couple of hours later the fifth man was retaken, just beyond New London. Evidently he had been heading for Yelverton, though progress was slow, because often he had to lie low in order to escape the vigilance of searchers. He had thrown away every scrap of clothing except his shirt. Thus, within seven hours of their mad escapade, the men were again in captivity, for, having regard to the conditions, mad it was. There was no friendly fog to cover

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their movements. Visibility was perfect over the open moor, because of the holiday season the number of people abroad was greater than it would have been at any other period, and the facilities for search were of the easiest. In short, the men had not a dog's chance of a complete getaway.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ESCAPES : BLOODHOUNDS ON THE TRAIL

THE escape of a resourceful convict on April 15, 1928, had a touch of the audacity of the Koepenick shoemaker, who five-and-twenty years ago set the world laughing at the expense of the civic authorities of Koepenick and the military caste he hoaxed.

The usual Sunday morning services were in progress in the chapels when W—— was busily engaged in certain work in the bath-house, in which he had been locked by a warder, who, for a time, had to be elsewhere on other duties.

W—— had been waiting this opportunity, and had made a skeleton key with which he opened the door. Reaching the yard unobserved, he proceeded to the rear of the separate cells, where, it is supposed, the prison wall is lowest. With a long piece of gas-piping, hooked at one end, he attempted to scale the wall, but failed, as the piping proved unsuitable.

W—— then went to the blacksmith's shop, and according to the story he told when released four years later, there obtained an officer's tunic, a screw-driver, an axe, and a pick, as well as a ladder. By means of the ladder he got over the wall, pulling the ladder after him. In the road below were three children and a dog. The animal started to bark, but ceased when the children spoke to him. He was wearing the tunic and carrying the gas-pipe, and one

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of the children, thinking he was an officer, asked him if he was going to mend the gas-piping.

Hiding the ladder in some bushes in the American cemetery, W—— made his way very cautiously into the Tavistock road and to the garage adjoining the house occupied by the Roman Catholic priest, and going to the rear climbed to the roof, in which he made an opening, and entered the building.

Here W—— went about his preparations very coolly. He found everything he needed at hand, including a motor-car, which he tuned up. Then flinging open the garage doors, he boldly drove into the road and down the main street. The residents, of course, knew Father Finnegan's car, and when it approached the cross-roads at the entrance to Princetown, it was, perhaps, not surprising that the police constable standing there should have concluded that the Father, having conducted Mass in the prison, was going for a little run on the moor, or perhaps for duty elsewhere.

At all events, with the customary precision and courtesy of the force, he saluted the padre, and with equal courtesy the latter acknowledged the salute, doing a quiet chuckle when a minute later he found he had cleared Princetown safely and was careering along the moorland road.

So far he had made history, for he was the first to use a motor-car as a means of escape from Dartmoor. Further, he had got a good start, because some little time passed before his disappearance from the prison was discovered, and when the news was at length telephoned to the various police stations in the surrounding area, W—— had cleared Dartmoor and was making for Totnes. He was, however, cute enough not to risk entering that town. Instead, he ran the car into a lane at Dartington, about a mile from Totnes.

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Hiding in the extensive woods until darkness fell, he then made his way towards the River Dart, where a stroke of good luck awaited him. He came upon a boat which had been left moored to the bank after being used by workmen the previous day. In this he crossed the river, then abandoning the boat. He was thus able to cut out Totnes and its bridge, and begin his tramp to Paignton, where he set about getting another car. He broke into two or three garages, the last being one in which he found what he wanted.

Selecting the newest of four cars, he drove into Torquay, where, at Meadfoot, he entered a café and obtained food, of which by this time he was in sore need. He proceeded to the Marine Parade, and there, without the slightest attempt at concealment, parked the car, and getting into it went to sleep on the back seat. Refreshed, he decided it was time to get out of Torquay, and this he succeeded in doing in spite of the roads being watched.

The fact that at Paignton he had selected a new car was, however, to prove his undoing. The cord tyres were almost unused, and their peculiar pattern left an easily recognizable impression on the road. When the description of the car was available, the police found the marks of the tyres on the Newton Abbot road, and following them to Blacking Lane, which gives access to Milber Down, they came upon W—, who had alighted and was bending over the car. He was endeavouring to remove the speed restriction washer usually found on a new car, and retained until the engine has worked itself into first-class running order.

As soon as he saw the police, W— made a further attempt to elude capture, but the forces against him were too great and too speedy. He was overhauled, and, realizing the game was up, submitted

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with the remark, "All right, I'm going quietly." He returned to Dartmoor with the truth of Goethe's dictum that "only law can give us freedom," impressed upon him, but with memories of two unforgettable days in the open as compensation for the penalty he would have to pay when the Prison Justices dealt with him.

The escape on February 6, 1931, of G—— and M—— was as sensational as that of W——, but in different ways. It covered five days, and for the first time in Dartmoor's history bloodhounds were used for tracking the fugitives. It was about 2.30 p.m. on a typical winter day on Dartmoor, with a heavy fog enveloping a wide area, that the two men, who had been working with others in the stone-sheds, made their daring bid for liberty. While the attention of officers was turned elsewhere they scaled the wall, using a rope, to which grappling hooks were attached, and a plank. They had disappeared before they were missed, and by the time the alarm was raised and the bell clanged its warning notes, they had sped away moorwards under cover of the dense fog, peeling off some of their garments as they ran.

Immediately all officers off duty were summoned to return, and large parties, joined by police, called out by telephone, were dispatched to form a cordon on all the surrounding roads. Meantime the prisoners, befriended by the ever-thickening fog, were safe from immediate pursuit. It was impossible to see any sign of them, and no sound of them was reported by any of the scouts. Every vehicle on the roads, as is customary, was stopped and examined by pickets, sometimes half a dozen times within a journey of a few miles, but not one yielded any clue, much less the convicts.

Somewhere they were trudging along towards a goal they hoped would yield them food and clothes.

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They, at all events, as subsequent events proved, were not "pisky-laid." They did not wander around in a circle to find themselves again within the ambit of the prison. They found ways and means of circumventing the fog, possibly by striking the railway and keeping to it, for they knew that, though by following its tortuous windings they would have a far longer journey than if they took what they conceived to be a bee-line, yet they were safe from bogs and pitfalls.

Be that as it may, about ten o'clock the same evening they reached Yelverton, and, as was discovered later, broke into two houses just above the railway station. In contrast with lit-up houses in every other direction, the two dwellings they selected were at the time unoccupied by their owners, and a dog in one of them fell to the temptation of some toothsome biscuits which the intruders found conveniently at hand, and was bribed into friendship and silence.

Collecting food and clothing in a basket, the men got away unobserved. Their success so far was extraordinary, for the houses they burgled were within sight of the station, and only about 200 yards off the main road, where a force of police and prison officers were on patrol!

Well fed, and with dry clothes into which they were able to change, the men were now fortified against the rigours of the weather, which towards morning cleared. Conditions on Saturday favoured the searchers rather than the searched, but the former were baffled: the latter had vanished, leaving no tracks. Then the suggestion was made that bloodhounds should be tried, and from kennels at St. Cleer, Liskeard, the animals were brought and put on the trail at Princetown, after they had "scented" the boots and apparel of the escaped men.

The dogs immediately ran straight for the plantation at Tor Royal, where the convicts had the previous

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day discarded certain articles. This test was deemed so conclusive that the dogs were put into their van and motored to Yelverton, where they were put on the scent from the houses entered by the convicts. After covering what seemed to be an abortive circle, the dogs struck the trail of the prisoners and unerringly made for a spot where, hitherto unrevealed, lay the basket they had appropriated, and which contained, neatly folded, the prison dress they had doffed when they donned the stolen clothes.

Subsequently, the dogs followed the trail to and through Meavy village and up the hill to Dousland, making two or three diversions where, as footprints proved, the men had left the road in order to reconnoitre certain dwellings. At Dousland the e'der of the two dogs broke down exhausted, after being on the run for five hours, and it was decided to call off the hunt until the following morning.

On Sunday, the weather was atrocious. Dartmoor was at its worst. Rain and wind were terrific, and everybody in the party that accompanied the further trial of the dogs were drenched, no matter how heavily coated. The dogs were put on at Dousland on the later portion of the previous night's line, but were unable to take it much farther, and a report having been made that the men were seen on Saturday afternoon at Wotter, the animals were taken there. They appeared to hit a definite line up the valley at Wotter, but lost it in the swamp, and the conditions were so impossible that the hunt was abandoned.

Almost at the same time M—— had been recaptured in the outskirts of Plymouth. Whether the men had been at Wotter or not, they were seen on Saturday evening by a villager in a field at Tamerton Foliot, evidently waiting until darkness fell before making a final effort to get into Plymouth. They knew they had been seen, and by the time the villager



*Photo: H. G. Evans*

BLOODHOUNDS FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF ESCAPED CONVICTS ALONG THE RAILWAY LINE AFTER THE BOOKING OFFICE HAD BEEN FORCED



*Photo: Patrick Fitzgerald, Plymouth*

A BLOODHOUND HOT ON THE SCENT FROM THE PRISON WALL  
The constable finds the pace a little difficult



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had informed, and returned to the spot with, the local constable, the pair had disappeared.

It was following this incident that they decided it was desirable to separate. M—— succeeded in crossing the fields and reaching Pennycross, where he entered a factory in course of erection. There he snatched some sleep during the early hours of Sunday morning, remaining undisturbed most of the forenoon. Then a workman and boy entered the building to fix canvas over an opening through which the rain was penetrating. The boy had been studying illustrated papers which contained portraits of the missing men. He jumped to the conclusion that the stranger in the building was one of the wanted men, and presently slipped unostentatiously away to inform a Plymouth police-constable who lived near.

That was the end of M——'s run, for the police arrived and he was taken as an ordinary passenger in a public omnibus to Crownhill Police Station, and later transferred to Princetown.

Meanwhile G—— still eluded capture. He ultimately found his way into Plymouth, working around to the eastern side instead of the western used by his comrade. He had had an additional day's liberty on Sunday and another on Monday. To the soul these stolen days had been sweet; physically they were bitter, for the "simple life" in the open in February is a test that few can withstand. But the end was coming. On the Tuesday morning, before day had broken, G—— was walking down the permanent way towards the Great Western locomotive depot at Laira, intent on boarding a goods train in which he hoped to get away towards Bristol. But he was disappointed; the trains had already been dispatched.

He walked along the line, lighting his steps with an electric torch. At the bridge over the railway

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line, where improvements were in progress, he spoke to two platelayers and a signalman, replying with equal courtesy to their "Good morning." They later told me their story.

"We thought," they said, "he was one of the company's detectives who, knowing a convict was at large in the neighbourhood, had been out patrolling the company's property."

One of them added, with a whimsical smile, "I said to my mate after the stranger had passed, 'Supposing he is not the company's detective, and that he is the convict himself !'"

However, they did not get beyond surmise, for when they saw the man walk on, and apparently enter one of the offices at the depot, they thought their original conjecture was right. When he arrived at the siding, the stranger dropped his torch on the ground, hung an overcoat, taken from one of the houses at Yelverton, on a truck, and then left the railway. His object apparently was to convey to the police that he had got away by goods train, but when they came on the scene, they quickly decided he had not.

A big drive was organized in the afternoon, the bloodhounds being again brought into use, and it is worth recording that, put on from the railway, the dogs immediately picked up the scent, and within a short time reached the spot where, about a quarter of an hour earlier, G—— had actually been retaken.

He had been seen by a police-constable, who detained him until detectives answered his summons. Then, his denials being rejected, he was taken to the police station, where, after a silver cigarette case stolen at Yelverton had been found in his possession, he admitted his identity. His hunger was appeased with a good meal, and when I saw him taken from the police station to the motor-car which was to

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convey him back to Princetown, worn out by exposure and fatigue and obviously footsore, he seemed scarcely to need the handcuffs that had been clapped on him. He looked as if he realized that "headstrong liberty is lashed with woe."

One of his adventures on the Saturday is worth relating. He and his comrade had come through a plantation to a sunken by-road, and were debating the risk of crossing to the other side in daylight. They decided to do so, and M—— impetuously made for the hedge, when G—— placed a restraining hand on him.

"Wait," he said, "and make sure the coast is clear."

"Looking over the hedge," said G——, "I saw just below a 'screw.' I could have biffed him on the head."

Instead, the couple lay low until the patrolling officer had passed from sight, and then crossed the road.

It was a year and nine months after his first escape from Dartmoor that J. M. G—— made his second break from prison. This time his comrade was F. A——. On Wednesday, November 16, 1932, they were working on the roof of the separate cells pointing the wall, which had become defective. It was suggested that the attempt had been planned for the first favourable opportunity, and that this was known to the general body of prisoners, who distracted the attention of officers by making a number of complaints about the quality of their dinners. The complaints were not justified, but the investigations resulted in the officers being delayed in going to and returning from their own meals, so there was some disorganization.

I do not think there was much in this, because, even if officers were late in returning, the convicts

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would not be released from their cells until the necessary staff was available for the purpose. Moreover, G—, after recapture, stated that in escaping, he and his companion received no assistance from fellow-prisoners nor from any one outside the prison during their six and a half days' liberty.

It was soon after the resumption of work following the dinner interval that the couple, ostensibly fetching material from the ground for use on the roof, seized a light ladder, raised it against the boundary wall, where it is deemed by the convicts, rightly or wrongly, to be lower than elsewhere, mounted to the top, and then dropped over to the other side, adjoining the American cemetery. They were seen mounting the wall by officers in charge of working parties whom the former were unable to leave in time to intercept the men, and being unarmed the officers could not shoot, as is done outside when convicts, ignoring warnings, persist in running away.

The blowing of a whistle by an officer was the first signal of the escape, and then the hoot of the siren, which has taken the place of the clanging of the big bell since the latter crashed into the blazing ruins of the administrative block during the mutiny, apprised the people of Princetown and the countryside. Before pursuit could be organized the other prisoners had to be martialled to their cells and put under lock and key, and by the time that was accomplished the fleeing men had gained a twenty minutes' start. This, and the heavy fog that befriended them, enabled them to disappear as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up.

Soon all the roads were manned by prison officers and county police, and later, bloodhounds were brought from Shaugh Prior and put on the trail of the fugitives from the point where they had dropped over the wall. But darkness had fallen, and the

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conditions were all against even the possibility of success, and the dogs were called off.

During the following day the searchers were completely baffled. There was no sound or sign of the runaways anywhere. Bloodhounds again brought into use followed what seemed to be a hot trail from the prison to Two Bridges, and thence towards Hexworthy, where it failed.

According to the story told by the men following their recapture, they went away over the moor towards Yelverton, and experienced little difficulty until they reached a river, presumably the Walkham, which, being in flood, presented difficulties in fording. The men, however, improvised something in the nature of a bridge of tree branches and driftwood between the boulders, and, using this, G— got safely over. A—, however, slipped, and fell into the stream, G— going to his rescue and hauling him out. In the bitterly cold weather A— was in a pitiable plight, with not a dry thread on him. They were compelled to lie up and dry his clothes as best they could.

During Thursday night they reached Horrabridge, their object being to get on the railway and then walk towards Exeter rather than Plymouth, which had proved only a trap to G— on his previous escape. They were in luck, for after the midnight train had passed through, the prison officers who had been on duty since the escape on Wednesday were withdrawn, the station was closed, and the watching convicts were able to enter the booking office by breaking a large pane of glass in the window and crawling through.

There they found what they badly needed : rain-coats and mackintoshes and a cap, which they carried away. They also broke the glass of an automatic machine on the platform and carried off a smaller one to a secluded spot near the lamp house, there

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smashed it, and obtained a supply of chocolates. Cigarettes and tobacco were obtained by using pennies from the small machine to work the larger one. They also found a piece of bread, and this, with the chocolates and some turnips from fields, appeased their hunger.

At six in the morning the robbery was discovered, and bloodhounds were brought to the station and took up the scent. They followed the trail along the line towards Tavistock, and then deviated to the moor and Walke's Farm. They were balked, however, by running into the tracks of a large flock of sheep that had obliterated the scent. The dogs were brought back and put on a second time, but again were foiled by sheep tracks.

During the whole of Friday the convicts lay low and resumed their travels by night. Their route lay along the Great Western Railway towards Tavistock and the Southern Railway to Lydford, with deviations into adjoining woods and fields where necessary to avoid railway officials and police. They broke into a couple of platelayers' huts, and at Lydford found, on Saturday, a newspaper containing an account of the robbery at Horrabridge and of the identification by Officer Udy of a footprint as being that made by a boot bearing the broad arrow. They thereupon removed the nails forming the arrow. From one hut they obtained oilskin overalls and a sou'-wester, and lit a fire by which they dried their clothes.

Throughout the week-end the police were puzzled as to the whereabouts of the men, because no report had been received of any person having seen them. It was believed they were still in the neighbourhood, and that a suggestion that they had got away through the collaboration of confederates was improbable.

Major Morris, the Chief Constable of Devon, travelling from Haldon by aeroplane, used the

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machine from which to search the area, but thick woods and undergrowth made the effort very much akin to looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. The convicts themselves saw the 'plane, and decided it was searching for them.

Bloodhounds were also tried in the Lydford area, from the place into which it was reported some one had broken. According to the men's own story the hounds came within a few yards of them, and the fugitives made friends with a terrier that approached them by patting and caressing it. The animal then ran off in quest of something more interesting !

Confirmation of this story lay in the statement of the pilot of the aeroplane that he called Major Morris's attention to what may have been a white dog in a ravine between Lydford and the railway, where police and bloodhounds were at work at the time.

Sunday provided another abortive search in the woods of the Morwellham and Gulworthy district, and on Monday the hunt continued from Double Waters to Tavistock, Sampford Courtenay, and at different points along the Southern Railway towards Crediton. The chase was now becoming keen, and the belief gained ground that the runaways were being driven into a net. They were seen at Sammons Level, near Crediton, by a signalman who, without guessing their identity, questioned them. They told him they were tramping the country in search of work.

The signalman advised them to be careful as there were policemen in the vicinity, and they might meet them. He had in mind that they were trespassers rather than convicts.

Once they saw some one approaching them with a lantern. They cut across country to avoid him, and it was on the Tuesday morning that they broke into a house named Elmfield, at Crediton. Here they

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had a prize find : a couple of bottles of stout. They also took some apples, cigarettes, tobacco, pipes, a fleece-lined raincoat, and a few shillings in silver. They entered by one of the windows, apparently were disturbed, and departed hurriedly, leaving behind a sou'-wester bearing the initials G.W.R., and a piece of cloth torn from the top of a convict's cap.

It was stated subsequently that the piece of cloth was used by A—— as a sock or rough bandage for a sore foot. It provided the searchers with a valuable clue, and convinced that the police were now within reach of the wanted men, the Chief Constable of Devon arranged with the Chief Constable of Exeter (Mr. F. T. Tarry) for the co-operation of the county and city forces in a great drive by which it was hoped to harry the convicts towards Cowley Bridge.

The surmise that they were still keeping touch with the railway, and probably making for the Southern goods depot at Exeter with the object of getting away on a goods train, proved correct, for in the evening G—— and A—— were seen near Pynes Bridge walking along the track towards Exeter. When P.-S. Greet hailed them they made no reply, but jumped over a thorn hedge and into a field, a depth of ten feet.

Sergt. Greet ran after one and P.-C. Sangster the other, overhauling them after a chase of about 200 yards. A—— offered no resistance to the sergeant, but submitted with the remark, "All right ; it's enough for me." The constable pinned G—— from behind and, after struggling a little, the latter also surrendered quietly with the remark, "All right, old man ; I'll give in."

The two men were taken to Exeter and given food. One wore gum boots and a long rainproof coat, and the other an overcoat. They had no food on them, but stated they had been living on turnips.

## BLOODHOUNDS ON THE TRAIL

They were cleanly shaven, having used a safety blade fastened into a cleft stick, and as they had no soap they had to be content with water for shaving. They were taken back to Princetown the same night, arriving at 2.45 a.m., only twelve hours short of a full seven days from the time they escaped.

G—, when asked whether he was glad his adventure had ended, replied, "Yes, but I didn't want it to end in this way." The capture was made less than thirty miles from Princetown by the most direct route. Probably by the doubling they had to engage in they had covered twice that distance.

After hospital treatment the men were transferred to the separate cells, where subsequently A— protested against his solitary confinement before being dealt with by the Visiting Justices. In a violent scene he assaulted the governor, and was himself knocked out. He was subsequently in hospital with congestion of the lungs, the result of exposure during his wanderings.

G— had the reputation of being one of the best-behaved men in the prison, with the reservation that if a chance offered he would make an attempt to escape. Recaptured, he took his disappointment quietly and gave no trouble. He was not concerned in the mutiny of January 1932. Before coming to Dartmoor he endeavoured to escape from Birmingham Gaol.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WHEN MUTINY WAS COMMON

**B**ECAUSE of its proportions, the mutiny of January 1932 dwarfed any similar episode in the history of Dartmoor, and the American *émeute* of 1815 is the only event comparable. But during the eighty years Dartmoor has been a convict prison there have been many mutinies. These, however—with the one great exception—though serious enough to cause grave anxiety, and to necessitate warnings both to civil and to military authorities of the likelihood of assistance being required, were suppressed before developing beyond the control of the officers.

Each outbreak was marked by the same features as characterized that of 1932. The trouble began on parade, or in the chapel, or there were demonstrations on and in both, the fermenters of disaffection invariably seizing a general assembly of convicts as their opportunity of initiating disorder or committing violence. Food, including porridge, was frequently the excuse. Warders were assaulted and sometimes wounded, and even the governor, deputy-governor, and doctor were victims of the insurgents' savagery.

Dartmoor was not singular in this. There was an outbreak of disorder at Portland, which resulted in the Home Office warning the governor of Dartmoor, and instructing him to confer with the general officer commanding at Plymouth with a view to securing the

support of soldiers, should such become necessary. There was, however, no need for their assistance, though the arrangement was renewed three years later, following trouble at Chatham.

Again the occasion for summoning the aid of troops did not arise, and although from that time down to the present day the governor has had power, in an emergency, to call for a contingent of fifty soldiers, the possibility of such power being exercised never arose until the 1932 mutiny.

Then the military authorities at Plymouth were asked to hold themselves in readiness to send help should it be required. The police, however, obviated the need for the call on the military to suppress the disorder, though the following night about fifty soldiers were requisitioned for guard duty outside the prison.

The first attempt at combined disorder was made in January 1852, but it was immediately suppressed, the governor being forewarned by a loyal prisoner. At that period the regular guard of soldiers was strengthened, apparently without need, as nothing happened for several days to confirm the information given to the governor. Then on the 13th—the mutineers had no qualms about the significance of numerals—the signal was given by the leader, named Slidders, and the men in No. 2 Prison created a hubbub by shouting and cheering. But they were not permitted to get further out of hand, for Captain Gambier took stern measures to suppress the disorder, and the men, thinking discretion the better part of valour, went to their work with a docility that did not prove deceptive.

Slidders was confined in the hated separate cells, with his spirit untamed, and during the night tried to escape by cutting through the wall with the iron heel of his boot. Of course, he failed, but the governor

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learnt something : there must be no more iron-shod boots in the separate cells. Henceforward the convicts were supplied with soft slippers. During the court proceedings following the 1932 mutiny a reference was made to the fact that a convict was wearing slippers. It caused a smile, but obviously there was a reason.

March of 1854 proved a period of a particularly stormy nature. On the 15th, while on parade, practically the whole body of convicts mutinied, and there was a scene of violence in which four warders were seriously injured. But the strong force on duty, under the direction of the governor, got firm grip of the situation and the leaders were subdued and sent to the separate cells, subsequently to pay the penalty for their violence.

A little more than a month later the deputy-governor, Mr. Morrish, was attacked as he was leaving the chapel ; and even the chaplain, usually regarded as the friend rather than the gaoler of the prisoners, was also the victim of the brutality of a disgruntled man, while a warder was stabbed in the face. Instances of this method of what is called "marking" (*i.e.* disfiguring) an officer was not an infrequent occurrence, a recent example being that of January 22, 1932, when an officer was slashed on both cheeks with a razor. To deal with the offender in 1854 a special magisterial court was constituted in the prison, and the assailant committed to the Devon Assizes for trial.

Still the orgy of violence continued, one officer being cut down with a spade while he was supervising work on which the convict was engaged, while another officer was stabbed in the presence of a large party of convicts on parade. The cause of all this trouble was the withdrawal of the system under which a convict who had served three of a seven years' sentence, or

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four years of a ten years' sentence, and had either obtained promise of employment or was given a certificate of fitness for work, was granted a ticket-of-leave. The change was due to the fact that convicts so released were not under police supervision, and almost immediately returned to their old haunts and criminal life. They had neither the will nor the urge to go straight.

The stone-sheds have been the scene of a great deal of trouble, over a long period. The earliest outbreak was in January of 1856, when there was a general revolt of the men working in the sheds, but they were overpowered before they could do serious injury to the guard. Round about this time the number of convicts in the prison was not far short of 1200, and discipline was at its worst.

In August of 1857 there was another mutiny on the parade ground, certain of the prisoners again attacking warders, five of whom were injured. This outbreak was said to be due to a lack of tact on the part of a principal warden. On the following day there was another riot, created, it was stated, as a protest against tainted meat being served for dinner. The weather was very hot, and the means of keeping meat fresh proved to be inadequate. The outbreak was suppressed by the armed guard.

Within a month there was yet another mutiny, the cause being dissatisfaction with the cocoa and gruel, which were below the standard which the men claimed was their due. Again the armed guard, combined with the firmness of the governor, overcame the demonstrators, without serious damage to any one. During a disturbance on parade on October 1858, an officer, assaulted by a convict, defended himself with his bayonet, the prisoner being wounded.

The variety of outbursts with which the officers had to deal was further emphasized by a strike of

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convicts in February 1854. This is the first record of a strike at Dartmoor, whatever happened in other prisons. A party of convicts was engaged in reclaiming peat land when they struck work. Apparently they objected to the wet, boggy conditions in which they had to work, and their strike was for the moment successful, for they were escorted back to their cells. Later, however, they paid the penalty of their insubordination.

In January of 1861 it was the turn of the governor. He was assaulted on the parade ground, and within a fortnight the deputy-governor was felled. A convict who went to the assistance of an officer attacked by another prisoner was stabbed with a chisel. The state of discipline can be judged from the fact that fights among the convicts were common, the general body of prisoners forming a ring round the combatants to prevent the warders from reaching and separating them. Yet another officer was cut down with a spade, and disabled for life. This form of attack on officers was common.

Disorder in No. 2 Prison on a November morning in 1861 resulted in a decision that the men concerned should not attend the usual service, and when the deputy-governor entered the chapel to request the chaplain to proceed with the service without them, he was assaulted by a convict.

A formidable outbreak occurred among a gang of nearly 270 convicts engaged, in November 1862, in reclaiming peat land near Two Bridges. It had previously been planned, because in response to a signal fourteen men rushed at the guard with uplifted spades, with which they threatened to hew them down. The guard fixed bayonets and loaded carbines, and threatened to use both if the ringleaders did not desist. This firm stand had its effect. The ringleaders, caring to risk neither bayonet thrust nor

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bullet, surrendered, and were handcuffed and marched back to prison. Later they were punished for their mutinous conduct, and the officers received the thanks of the Home Secretary for the courage with which they dealt with the outbreak.

A change in the dietary scale in 1864 was assigned as the cause of a strike by fifty odd convicts, who declined to carry on with the work on which they were engaged. There was a touch of the unusual in the sentences of bread-and-water diet, in that it was to continue until the offenders had expressed contrition. Gradually the majority of them submitted, and those who did not were sent elsewhere.

Although not so frequent as in the earlier period of the prison's occupation by convicts, attacks on officers recurred from time to time in later years. One of the most serious was a murderous assault on a warder by a young criminal. The officer was so grievously injured in the head that though he made a partial recovery, when his life hung on a thread, he died after his assailant had been tried and sentenced for attempted murder.

This was the only occasion within memory of living journalists when a magisterial court, open to the Press, was held in the prison. Two Plymouth reporters attended, and the survivor tells a remarkable story of the violence of the prisoner, whose exhibition was such that the proceedings were adjourned for a couple of hours while the man recovered from his paroxysms in the corridor of one of the halls.

It was a bitterly cold day, and as the prisoner had stripped off every garment except his shirt it was not surprising that this treatment cooled him down. He returned to the court in chastened mood, and was committed for trial at the Devon Assizes, before Baron Huddlestane (the last of the Barons), who sentenced him to five years' penal servitude. Good conduct

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earned him some remission of sentence, and after his release he went to Australia.

In November of 1880, the prison staff discovered a plot for a mutiny of prisoners on a large scale. This, while causing some anxiety, also stimulated officers to greater vigilance, and it was thought that the knowledge of this which had spread among the convicts had resulted in the plot being abandoned. Such was not the case.

Of the gangs employed outside the prison walls, Nos. 18 and 19 were composed of perhaps the most dangerous characters. Their work lay in the granite quarry. As it was believed certain of the men were potential mutineers, when the gangs went to the quarry on November 12 the guard was strengthened. During the afternoon one of the officers heard mutterings among the prisoners, and informed the principal officer in charge of the parties. At the same time fog fell, the principal officer thereupon ordering the men to fall in preparatory to marching them back to the prison.

As the men came down to give up the tools with which they had been working, a convict named Beavan attacked Officer Westlake with a crowbar, knocking him down and inflicting injuries to his head. Westlake pluckily regained his feet, and endeavoured to get the men to fall in. Beavan, however, raced away, calling to the other prisoners, "Now, boys, come or and help me, as you promised to do."

Two or three responded to his call, but as Beavan began to climb the wall three shots rang out. They were more of a warning than anything else, but had no effect. Beavan did not stop, and another shot was fired. Beavan dropped, and lay still, and when the officers reached him he was dead—shot through the spine.

Meanwhile another prisoner, named O'Brien, had

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continued his flight. When called on to stop, he, too, ignored warning rifle-fire, and was brought down by a shot aimed at him. Wounded, he was taken back to the prison, where, in hospital, his injuries were found to be less dangerous than at first thought.

There was indescribable confusion in the quarry, but it was caused by panic rather than any further attempt at escape. The shooting of their two leaders had convinced the prisoners of the folly of violence on their part, and they were got under control and marched back to the prison. The sound of firing had given the general alarm, and all the other working parties were hurried back to their cells. At the time there were 990 prisoners, and the prison staff was 160 strong.

At the inquest on Beavan the jury returned a verdict that the warders had not exceeded their duty or violated the law in shooting Beavan while he was attempting to escape, and therefore the homicide was justifiable.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE GREAT ÉMEUTE : CAUSES

ONE hundred and seventeen years were to divide the two great sensations in the history of Dartmoor : the tragedy of the riot of American prisoners of war on April 6, 1815, and the mutiny of convicts on January 24, 1932, though, unlike the former, the latter was unaccompanied by loss of life.

Probably there is scarcely a cinema-goer who, having seen upon the screen "The Big House," a film of prison life in United States, did not think the events pictured would be utterly impossible in this country, and was not critical of the lengths to which American sensationalism will go. I am not going to assert that the mutiny at Dartmoor was in fact a parallel of the fiction of that picture. As compared with the British mode, the American system of housing prisoners, the comparatively unrestricted personal association and contact of the men, the apparently unlimited means of smuggling weapons into the prison, and the use of machine-guns in a sanguinary battle between convicts and the prison forces, are obvious differences and, one may venture, impossibilities. Probably in some of these things the licence of the film-producer ran beyond the realm of actuality, but the picture was not an inconceivable approximation of prison life in the States.

Yet, with all these distinctions, there was in

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Dartmoor a resemblance that startled the whole country. There was no pitched battle, no attempts at massed escape, no slaughter. But the breakaway from discipline and control, until then unbelievable, was complete. For a time the prison internally was in the absolute command of the prisoners ; authority was deposed, subjected to gross indignity, and fugitive ; the staff was impotent except that portion of it that manned the gates and the walls and prevented escapes ; a Machiavellian spirit of destruction reigned ; buildings and equipment were wrecked ; the administrative offices destroyed by fire ; the documented records of prisoners and other contents of the prison archives consigned to the flames ; certain officers assaulted and wounded ; "loyal" convicts subjected to violence by rioters, and some of the latter laid out with cracked skulls when the police arrived and quelled the riot by one decisive charge.

Fortunately there was no loss of life, and from the official reports and evidence at the trial of the mutineers, it is clear that while there was violence, there was no desire nor attempt to kill. But the dimensions of the outbreak astonished even the mutineers. Having loosed the Demon of Destruction they were unable to set a limit to his orgies. As one of them stated in his evidence at the trial, though they started it as a protest, they had no idea it would grow ; neither had the officers. "When it occurred," he said, "the officers were not prepared for it, and they naturally fell away." On the other hand, it was argued that the officers were powerless because they were understaffed.

The story of the mutiny and the events preceding it was told in the report made to the Home Secretary by Mr. Herbert du Parcq, K.C., after an inquiry conducted by him in the prison, with the assistance of Mr. Alexander Paterson, a Prison Commissioner.

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Much additional information was elicited during the trial. Later, when certain of the prisoners were released with remission of sentence in recognition of the service they rendered to the authorities during the trouble, I talked with some of them and heard their explanations. But nowhere has any convincing cause been given.

Reasons advanced by convicts were discontent with the quality of the food, particularly the porridge, resentment of the alleged ill-treatment of one of their number, the nerve-fraying silence rules, the inordinately long period to be served before a man is granted the privilege of smoking, and restrictions imposed in respect to changes from one working party to another. At all events, the penalty for mutiny must have been ever present in the minds of the prisoners, for in each cell hangs a card bearing this warning : "Any man inciting to mutiny, attempting to mutiny, or actually mutinying, will be subject to corporal punishment." Such offence is dealt with by the Board of Visitors and not by the governor.

It is difficult to believe that an occasional failure in the quality of the porridge would drive men to such excesses as were committed on that Sunday, and to risk the penalties that would inevitably follow. But, on the other hand, right through the history of Dartmoor and other prisons, there have been recurrences of food trouble, and Mr. du Parcq remarks that "there is no grievance which would be more likely to unite a body of malcontents in prison than a grievance about food."

The assertion was made officially that the porridge was tampered with to that end, and I found, in talking with released men, that one of them attributed the trouble to a violent criminal, and that the general tendency was to stress the monotony of the prison system rather than any question of poor food. Mr.

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du Parcq's conclusion was that the prisoners had no substantial grievance, and that such grievance as they had would not have led to any disorder unless a few of the dangerous prisoners, partly by their power of leadership and partly by intimidation, had played on the feelings and fears of others. Finally, the official view was epitomized in the assertion that "the porridge was an excuse; not a cause."

As to prison conditions and the system of punishment, one of the accused men who was acquitted at the trial was asked if he knew anything of the separate cells. "I should think so," he replied. "I have been there for nearly all my sentence. They are really meant for men under punishment and also for those who have tried to escape. (The witness was included in the latter class.) In the silent cells there are really no lights at all. There is a kind of box within a box, apparently to prevent other prisoners knowing what is happening when the warders come in to mishandle you. One punishment is bread and water for fifteen days—three days of bread and water, and three days of ordinary diet alternately. That is followed by 42 days of No. 2 punishment. I prefer No. 1 myself."

The part a change of routine may play was described in his evidence at the trial by the governor at this period (Mr. S. N. Roberts). When he took up his duties in April 1931, he found the output of work by convicts was not in proportion to the population of the establishment, and formed the opinion that that was largely attributable to the fact that the prisoners had been allowed to change their work too frequently. Down to that time a man, on making application, had been permitted to change after three months in a particular party. After consultation with the assistant-commissioner, Colonel G.

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Turner, he decided to alter the system so that when a man was allocated to his first party he remained with it for twelve months, unless removed on medical grounds or in the interests of the establishment. With the exception of skilled workers who were tested by the foreman of works, the men were allocated to work parties as soon as vacancies arose in them. The change had the full approval of the Prison Commissioners.

Some of the men took exception to the change of rule, because they thought it was their right to ask to be transferred to another party if they wished. One argument was that change broke the monotony of prison life. Another that sometimes a man is allocated to a party in which there may be an enemy (made outside the prison), or quarrelsome or violent men who await opportunity for assault. In the interests of his own safety and peace of mind it was not right, it was argued, that a man should be debarred from removal to a new party for twelve months, and before the change, a marked man would be transferred elsewhere. The official reply to this was that although the automatic right of change at the end of three months had been abolished, it was still possible, where there was legitimate reason, for a change to be made.

The work parties are engaged in a variety of occupations. One party works in the tailor's shop, another in the quarries ; yet others on the farm, and so on. According to statements at the trial some of the bog parties objected to what they felt were trivial tasks, such as weeding where weeding was unnecessary. The governor's reply was that when the weather is wet or foggy these parties have to be employed in the prison, and frequently tasks have to be made for them. He had given instructions for as many as possible to be employed, as a temporary

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measure, in the mailbag shop, where accommodation is limited.

One man complained that he was not employed as an engineer; the governor's reply being that in view of the man's record he could not permit him to work as an engineer. In answer to the assertion that the governor's system of discipline was an utter failure, and had degenerated into intolerable persecution, from which the prisoners had no redress, Mr. Roberts said that the output of work following the change he instituted had increased by 32 per cent.; further, that prisoners could always complain to the director or the Board of Visitors, or petition the Secretary of State, which they were only too keen to do if they thought they had a grievance.

The governor's view that frequent change of occupation was reflected in reduced output of the workshop or farm, and that the opportunity for a man to learn a trade would be slight, was supported by Mr. du Parcq, who says he could not but think that Mr. Roberts and the Commissioners had the better of the argument. "And it is a fact which lends support to their view that during Mr. Roberts's time the output of farm and workshops increased very satisfactorily. Moreover, although several convicts complained to me about the change, others had no objection to it."

Another grievance urged by the men was that the governor had stopped men who did not attend chapel from hearing the news read. This, however, was denied, though it was admitted that on one occasion the governor prohibited men who were excused from chapel to attend a concert. That was resented by the prisoners, and the governor communicated with the Home Office, which waived the rule on the point, the men being afterwards allowed to attend.

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Yet another reason assigned for the discontent was that, because of the conditions to which they were subjected, men were driven to suicide, but the reply of the authorities was that suicides were uncommon, and cases were instanced of men feigning suicide in an endeavour to trick the officers. One allegation by prisoners was that men who made repeated complaints were invariably victimized, and that because of the rules printed on the cell-cards the majority were afraid to make complaints. This was strongly denied by the governor and other officers, and the former stated that he had always found the prisoners willing to make complaints if they thought they had any reason for doing so.

However, whatever the causes, the discontent among the prisoners found expression in various ways. During the six months preceding the mutiny numerous plans and preparations for escape were discovered, and in the governor's opinion were one of the root causes of the trouble. A number of skeleton keys was found in possession of prisoners, and in various places. Most, if not all of them, appeared to have been made in the prison ; some were of rough design. Weapons of various kinds were discovered. One particularly dangerous "cosh" (a life preserver), made with a piece of marlinspike and a lump of lead, was found in a water cistern. Another find was a "cosh" (one of the exhibits at the trial) made of rubber, which, with its rounded head and flexible handle, was an especially vicious weapon.

One of the hiding-places for these implements was behind a partition in the tinsmiths' shop, where also a small fanlight had been eased. Here, early in January 1932, a carefully made rope, weighted and with a hook at one end, was found, the association of this and the eased fanlight as a means of escape being

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so obvious that the same day the governor gave instructions to the foreman of the works to line the fanlight with reinforced concrete and fix meshed netting. Some of the weapons were probably made in the prison, but hacksaw blades, invaluable articles for the purposes of escape, in the opinion of Mr. du Parcq, must have been taken into the prison from outside, and if that view were correct, the conclusion was almost inevitable that some member of the prison staff smuggled them in. The ropes found with weight or hook at one end, were probably made in prison with mailbag material.

It was impossible to ignore this evidence that the prisoners included a number of desperate men, but the governor's view, borne out by the opinion of witnesses at the inquiry, was that they were only a small number. Mr. Roberts suggested four, whom he was able to identify as members of "gangs." They were the worst prisoners he had ever had to control. Of the rest of the convicts 50 per cent. were law-abiding, and the other 50 per cent. without ringleaders would be all right.

The omens of trouble continued to gather, and just before Christmas 1931 it was ascertained that elaborate preparations had been made with a view to escape, suspicion falling on the four men mentioned, and the precaution was taken to keep them apart from one another. On January 18, 1932, one of the four, whose record showed him to be a dangerous criminal, escaped from his party while exercising. It was rather foggy, and apparently the man hoped that the fog would cover his planned attempt to break prison. He was, however, found hiding in a stoke-hole. A rope with a hook attached to it hanging from the wall was to be the means of enabling him to scale that obstacle. The man was removed to the separate cells to await the adjudication of the Board of Visitors.

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On Friday, January 22, 1932, it was reported to the governor that the porridge was not up to the usual standard. Mr. Roberts went to the kitchen, examined the porridge, and found it was not properly cooked. He suspected that some one had tampered with it, his suspicions being stimulated by the fact that there had been no complaints until that day. He consulted the senior medical officer, who thought the oatmeal used had at some time got damp and then been dried. The governor's conjecture cannot be dismissed as improbable, comments Mr. du Parcq, and one of the prisoners in a written statement suggested that cold water might have been added to the porridge by one of the cooks (prisoner) for the purpose either of getting his own back on an officer, or of trying to get rid of an officer from the kitchen. "From what I heard on Saturday, January 23," wrote the convict, "I should say the above explanation of the complaint about the porridge (water in it) was the right one."

At all events, the governor recognized the justice of the complaint and gave the prisoners an extra ration of bread, potatoes, and margarine in lieu of the porridge. At midnight on the same date the governor went to the kitchen again to satisfy himself that the porridge for the following morning's breakfast was all right. It was boiling at the time, and in good condition, but at 8.30 a.m. the deputy-governor reported that the porridge was bad.

Mr. Roberts thereupon again visited the kitchen and found that the porridge had turned out a failure, but that it was "eatable." Although thick when he examined it at midnight, it was now watery. The suspicion that some one had added water to it was strengthened, but still remained a suspicion. The governor ordered the issue of four ounces of corned beef in lieu of the porridge ration, and at first the

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prisoners appeared satisfied, but later some of them created noise and shouted.

Considering the men had a legitimate grievance, and that it was right that he should let them know he was taking steps to remedy it, the governor went to the chapel, where the men had assembled for morning service, to tell them so. When, however, he entered the pulpit to address them he was received in a very hostile manner. A number of men were rude, and whistled and shouted.

"Surely you are going to give me a hearing," he said. "I am sorry that the porridge yesterday was not up to the standard, and again to-day it is not quite as it should be. However, I issued you yesterday with bread, potatoes, and margarine, and to-day I have issued you with corned beef, and arranged with the master cook to come in to-night and cook it himself, to find out what the trouble is. I hope that this will satisfy you, but I am anxious to see you get fair play, and I hope we shall have no further trouble with it after to-night."

The men then quieted down, and the governor left the chapel. The Church Army chaplain (Mr. Ball) thereupon entered the pulpit and gave out the number of the hymn. The choir and about 30 per cent. of the men stood up, but the rowdy element shouted them down, and they gradually resumed their seats. The scene was extraordinary, for in the strained conditions, and faced with a disgruntled and hostile section, Captain Ball sang the hymn himself. Having read one prayer, he next proceeded to read the news, and it was well received except by a section of the prisoners, although the psychological atmosphere was decidedly electric. There were some exclamations during the reading of a piece of news about an aeroplane flight, because the prisoners wanted him to go on with the football results.

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Having concluded, Captain Ball left the pulpit, and as the men filed out he heard one man say, "Now we will start on parade," but he did not attach much importance to it.

Before the service there was in the minds of some of the officers a strong feeling of impending trouble. They were of opinion it would be a mistake to assemble the prisoners in the chapel, and one experienced and capable officer told Mr. du Parcq he thought it was the most foolish thing that had ever been done. The chapel is the traditional scene of outbreaks of disorder. The discipline is necessarily to some extent relaxed, and the prisoners are gathered together under conditions which make communication easy. But, "in my view," writes Mr. du Parcq, "although there was danger of disturbance, the governor took the right course in carrying on with the usual routine. If he had not done so he would have provided the ringleaders with a fresh grievance, and given them occasion to say that the authorities were afraid of them."

Whether the governor was wise in addressing the convicts was quite another matter. Asked by Mr. du Parcq whether he did not think that when he tried to be conciliatory prisoners would be inclined to say, "See, he is getting frightened," Mr. Roberts replied, "I felt that with just a small element, but the majority were with me." The noise in the chapel was led by two men, and others took it up. After the governor's address there was a distinct effort at applause from one section, but this was drowned by the others.

The opinion expressed by Colonel Turner to Mr. du Parcq was that the governor made a mistake in addressing the men. It was an error to apologize to them, although done with the best intention in the world. But, he added, it is largely a matter of a

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man's judgment. "It's exactly what Roberts would have done. He hates anything to go wrong. It hurt him that the porridge was wrong. Any ordinary man would have slanged the cook and told him he had got to put it right."

Mr. du Parcq agreed with the opinion of Colonel Turner, whose view of the general conduct and capacity of the governor was extremely favourable. On the other hand, even the officer who thought it a great mistake to hold the chapel service on Saturday, did not see anything wrong with the governor's address, and a very large number of prisoners profess to have been very favourably impressed with it. They applauded his courage. On the other hand, one of the prisoners thought the governor's procedure out of place.

While the governor's action in the chapel had one advantage in giving him opportunity of gauging the temper of the prisoners, and showing him the situation was abnormal and not without danger, Mr. du Parcq's conclusion was that Mr. Roberts made a serious mistake in addressing the prisoners in the terms which he used, for such conciliatory and apologetic language was likely to be interpreted by many of the prisoners as a sign of weakness and timidity.

An incident had occurred the previous afternoon (Friday, January 22) which provided further emphasis to the dangerous situation which had developed. Officer Birch, in charge of the twine-shed party on parade, gave them the usual order to fall out. There was some talking and shouting, and while he was directing that this should cease, one of the prisoners jumped on his back and slashed him on both sides of the face with a safety-razor blade, which had been fastened to a piece of wood with a nail passed through the hole of the blade, and bound with mailbag thread.

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Although a number of prisoners witnessed the assault none attempted to render assistance. No reason was given for the attack, and at the Assize the assailant was brought to trial and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

Mr. du Parcq, in commenting on the incident, said there was no general animosity among the prisoners against Birch. On the contrary, he was popular—a man whose bark was worse than his bite—and regarded as a kindly man. There had been no previous complaints against the assailant.

The combination of events down to the disturbance in the chapel decided the governor to communicate with the Home Office, and about 11.30 a.m. on Saturday, January 23, he spoke on the telephone to Major Lamb, Assistant Prison Commissioner, explaining the position, and asking if he might make arrangements to call in the police of Devon County and Plymouth. Permission was granted, though Mr. Roberts was asked not to call in the police unless it was absolutely necessary.

An hour later there was further trouble, between thirty and forty prisoners complaining of their dinners, and it was reported to the deputy governor (Captain Richards) that men in the kitchen were out of control. He saw the men and took their complaints. Examining the food, he found that the stew was thin and that some of the potatoes were not very good. In consequence, he told the men that he would give them another ration of bully-beef and more potatoes. With the exception of two, who murmured about the bully-beef, the men went away content with Mr. Richards' decision.

Mr. du Parcq's comment upon this was that the potatoes had long been the subject of not unjustified complaint, but he was satisfied that this particular dinner was not so bad that it would have caused

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any sort of demonstration unless a mutinous spirit existed.

This incident added to the governor's disquiet, and he telephoned to the Chief Constable of Plymouth (Mr. Leslie Wilson) and to the Chief Constable of Devon (Major L. H. Morris), asking them to make arrangements to assist him, if it became necessary. Both intimated they would do so, and Major Morris said he would visit the prison the following day and also procure the attendance of Superintendent Smith from Crownhill.

In consequence of the governor's report to the Home Office, Colonel Turner arrived at the prison about 8.30 p.m., it having been decided that he should come down "just to assist and advise the governor if he wanted any assistance." He found the governor "apprehensive and puzzled," but "showing no sign of having lost his nerve." In reply to a question whether the governor could lay his hands on the particular men who were causing the trouble so that they could be transferred to other prisons, Mr. Roberts said he could not say definitely who they were. There were possibly thirty or forty of them, and he could not lay his finger on all of them. Following the disturbance in the chapel it had come clear that many more than the originally suspected ring-leaders were disaffected.

From the time of Colonel Turner's arrival, he was regarded as being in a sense in charge of the prison. Technically the governor was still fully responsible, but on all questions of policy he may be overruled by the Prison Commissioners, and is subject to their censure if he does any act of which they disapprove. Inevitably, therefore, according to Mr. du Parcq, any course recommended by Colonel Turner was likely to be followed by the governor, and to this extent it might be said the governor's responsi-

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bility was lessened. "I felt," explained the governor, "that I could not deal with things while Colonel Turner was here without consulting him."

Anxious that there should be no further cause for complaint about the porridge, the governor visited the kitchen at five o'clock on Sunday morning, and found that of the two "boilings" he had ordered, one had failed (a fact that again suggested the porridge had been tampered with) and the other was good. Breakfasts were served from the latter, and there were eight complaints, but the governor did not accept them, as both the medical officer and Colonel Turner had examined the porridge and confirmed his opinion that it was good.

Acting on the authority given him by the Prison Commissioners, the governor had caused all the officers to attend for duty that morning, the total being between 100 and 110, whereas the normal staff on Sundays was 55. This meant that an increased number of officers (including principal officers) was on duty in the halls, while 23 were kept in reserve. Of these, ten were on emergency duty at the gate, and ten were posted in the old prison, a disused building.

The strengthening of the staff on duty was noticed by the prisoners who, as early as 6 a.m., were shouting in their cells. One of them told Mr. du Parcq, who believed it to be true, that when the men were released from their cells some of the ringleaders whispered to others, "You see they are getting windy."

After breakfast there was a great deal of shouting in the cells, and it was decided to remove some of the noisy prisoners from B2 hall to the separate cells to await adjudication and punishment. The men were shouting, using bad language, and singing "The Red Flag."

Then followed an incident which appeared to give

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final stimulus to the spirit of rebellion. For disciplinary reasons it was decided to remove two men who occupied adjoining cells to the separate cells. One of them had the reputation among the other prisoners of being "simple." Though protesting his innocence, he went without giving any trouble. Not so the other, for according to the official story, when Officer Udy went to the cell the prisoner challenged him to enter and take him. On the officer putting his hand on the shoulder of the prisoner, the latter, so it was alleged, struck at him with a safety-razor blade fixed and bound to a short stick, just missing his right wrist. Officer Udy thereupon summoned other officers. Three entered the cell together, and as the prisoner was said to be still threatening Udy with the razor blade, one of the other officers struck him on the head with his baton and stunned him. While the man was still unconscious he was removed to the hospital.

At the time the other convicts in B2 hall were in their cells, and heard the scuffle and sound of the blow. Some of them asserted at the trial that the prisoner was dragged insensible from his cell and along the floor of the corridor. Whether that was so or not, it gave rise to rumours among the prisoners, which Mr. du Parcq stated were a further incitement to disorder. The story was given a more sinister turn when it was represented that it was the "simple" convict who had been, as prisoners considered, the victim of the brutality of the officers, and had been bludgeoned without cause. There was no foundation for it, the man himself assuring Mr. du Parcq that no assault of any kind had been made upon him. The other man was tried at the Assize with attempting to wound Officer Udy, and acquitted.

Whether or not there was anything for which the officers were responsible that could be construed as

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brutality, some of the prisoners were convinced there was, and one of the accused at the trial, in reply to the Solicitor-General's question, "Do you think there was brutality that morning?" said, "I did and was out to stop it. I fought against it for four years on active service (he was a Military Medallist), and I feel I was justified in fighting against it in His Majesty's Prison."

When the insensible prisoner was taken to the hospital the noise among the convicts continued, and it became a question whether the men should be brought out as usual for exercise and attendance at chapel. After consultation with Colonel Turner the governor decided that they should.

Chief Officer Smale, it was stated in the course of subsequent proceedings, was against letting the men out on parade, and said so. He gave the staff when they went on duty to understand there was some unrest in the prison, and though he did not expect an outbreak, he told them they must exercise tact and discretion in dealing with the prisoners.

Commenting on the governor's decision, Mr. du Parcq regarded it as a curious fact that while all in authority were prepared for disorder in the chapel, it never seemed to have occurred to anybody that the men might get out of hand and seek to escape from the control of their officers when they were at exercise on the parade grounds.

The chapel is the traditional place for disorder, and Major Morris, speaking of the days when he was governor, said, "In the chapel we had 600 prisoners and only 18 warders in charge. On parade we had a greater number of warders. If we expected trouble on a Sunday morning we should lay our plans for trouble in the chapel, and not on parade."

Colonel Turner, asked whether it occurred to him that there might be danger of the prisoners getting

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unruly on the parade ground, said, "No. Many have started on the parade ground here, but they have always failed. It seems that when they are lined up they don't like to break discipline."

"The governor had received information from prisoners that trouble was to be begun in the chapel," comments Mr. du Parcq, "and this seems to have put him off his guard. The deputy-governor does not seem to have recalled the threat he had chanced to hear on Saturday, 'Now we will start on parade,' though he was at first opposed to the men being brought out of their cells, and so expressed himself to the governor. Three courses were open : the prisoners might have been kept in their cells ; the forces in the prison might have been so disposed, if thought sufficient, that they could have quelled any trouble at the outset ; or if it were thought that outside help was necessary, police reinforcements could have been obtained before the prisoners were let out of their cells, and kept in reserve to deal with any trouble that might arise."

Mr. du Parcq points out that each of the three courses had drawbacks. First, the men could not have been kept in their cells indefinitely. Second, the great risk of trying to use the force available to stop disorder would have been that if the prisoners got out of hand the reserve force necessary to prevent escape would have been depleted and ineffective. Third, the objection to obtaining a police force was one of special difficulty for the governor of Dartmoor prison, for while he "may incur the most serious risks if he waits until a real emergency has arisen, he may on the other hand, if he calls in the police to assist in an emergency which never does arise, be considered to have been unduly apprehensive and perhaps incur ridicule and censure. Further, if the threatened trouble had been averted that day, it was

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most probable that those at the bottom of it would have found some other favourable opportunity.

"But, when all is said, it is difficult not to feel that the possibility of an outbreak on the parade ground ought to have been anticipated," comments Mr. du Parcq, "and that if it had been anticipated, and the guards even moderately strengthened, it might not have occurred."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GREAT EMEUTE : THE UNDERWORLD UNCHAINED

**W**HATEVER the explanation attempted, the curious fact remains, that while serious trouble was expected, possibilities of scene and time were completely overlooked, and when it broke, the authorities were taken unaware and unprepared. Leaderless, because their chiefs were cut off, and rendered impotent by the mutineers, the staff was split into small parties. So outnumbered, they were without opportunity or means of co-operation, though it may be, when ultimately they found their way, singly or in couples, to the main gate, and gathered there in fair number, a strong personality among them might have rallied and led them in a round-up of the rioters, and so forestalled that of the police a little later.

The stage was set for the extraordinary outbreak, when, at 8.55 on that Sunday morning, the officers paraded for duty, and shortly after nine o'clock unlocked the cells and marched the prisoners to the various exercise grounds. One hundred and eighteen in charge of six officers lined up on B2 parade, situate between A and B halls. In accordance with the usual routine, the order was given to the prisoners to fall out. Some of them obeyed ; others did not, but shouted, "Stand still ! "

One man folded his arms and urged his fellows to

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"Stand still. Obey orders. Draw your sticks. Up him, boys, and kick him" (Officer Udy). The same man told Officer Udy he ought to be kicked to death for knocking out a "barmy" prisoner. He referred to the man taken prisoner that morning to the separate cells, and mistaken for the second prisoner, who was batoned and removed to the hospital. The command, "Draw your sticks," was an indication that some of the convicts had secreted "coshes" in their clothing.

The officers were not intimidated, and Officer Udy, with a view to impressing them, told the men that there were "five hundred coming in a few minutes," meaning reserve forces from outside. He also appealed to men of common sense to stand tight. The ringleaders, however, shouted to the men to go to the other parades, get the rest of the boys, and "make them bring out the governor." About forty or fifty broke away. The others remained with the officers, who, after about twenty minutes' exercise of a kind, marched them to B Hall. On arrival, they would not enter the cells, because they feared reprisals by the mutineers should the latter find them there.

The riot had begun, and for the next two hours the prison was in complete command of the mutineers with one important exception—the exits—in retaining control of which the officers, as Mr. du Parcq points out, fulfilled one of two important axioms of prison discipline, namely, in case of disorder the first duty of the officer is to prevent escape. The other, not to shed blood or to do injury to a prisoner if, consistently with the primary duty, he can avoid it, has also to be considered in any criticism of the staff for not taking more vigorous and forceful methods of suppressing the outbreak.

The effectiveness of the measures to prevent escape is explained by the fact that when it was

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apparent that trouble was brewing, and even before it came to a head, guards armed with Snider rifles loaded with buckshot, and revolvers, were posted outside the boundary walls. But watch the scene :

The prisoners have broken away from B2 parade. Exulting in their unaccustomed freedom, and bent on enlisting reinforcements, they sweep from parade to parade, where other companies of prisoners are at exercise. Shouting, laughing, and boisterously demonstrating, they burst on A2 parade, urging the men there to "Come on!" Staggered, and in numbers too small to be effective, the officers appeal to their charges to stand fast. Many obey. Others, with alacrity, break the ranks, and waverers are persuaded to join them.

To D parade and the officers' quarters rush the ever-growing mob, arming themselves with such weapons as come to hand as they proceed. In their progress they meet the bandmaster collecting his bandsmen from the different parades. The bands-men's duty is to lead the musical portion of the service in the chapel, but they are this morning to play other tunes, for though hesitant, and questioning the band-master as to "what can we do?" they are swept on with the mutineers.

On each parade ground a number of prisoners remain "loyal." They are the timid, or the more thoughtful section, convinced of the futility of the outbreak, or determined not to forfeit their release when, within short periods, their sentences expire.

As the mob rush past the bath-house and its heap of fuel, they obtain supplies of ammunition consisting of lumps of coke, stones, and other materials, with which they pelt officers who try to stem their rush, and smash windows. They make for the separate cells, their declared object being to release the so-called "barmy" prisoner, and the man who was

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sent there after his attack on Officer Birch on the previous Friday, because they profess to believe that during the trouble the staff will revenge themselves upon him. Here Officer Winter is in charge, and hearing shouting, he looks through the windows of one of the cells. He sees prisoners at large and smashing windows and other things. Thereupon he locks both the outer gate and the inner doors. Presently the mutineers arrive, but receiving no response to their call, and failing to gain admittance, they leave.

Some of them commandeer a portable shed, and placing it against the boundary wall attempt to use it as a means of climbing over. They fail. Others visit the stone-sheds and arm themselves with such weapons as pickshafts, hammers, and iron bars, with which they go to the administrative offices, bent on serving on the governor and the Assistant Prison Commissioner an ultimatum for surrender to their claims, under penalty of a continuance of the riot, destruction of the prison, and escape of the prisoners. Their demand, interpreted from their frenzied shouts, is for the release of the prisoners in the separate cells, and a remedy for the grievances of all.

In his office, the governor is at work. He has been in consultation with Colonel Turner and the deputy-governor on the question whether the men shall be allowed to go on parade and attend chapel. The governor tells Colonel Turner that if the prisoners see him it may incite them to demonstrate, and the Assistant Commissioner, therefore, decides not to provide them with that opportunity, but to remain in the office during the chapel service.

The deputy-governor leaves with the intention of seeing the men into the chapel, hears shouting from the direction of B2 parade ground, observes that none of the usual parties are approaching the chapel,

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and is informed by a principal officer that the men are running off the parade grounds. He hurries back to the office to inform the governor and Colonel Turner, and telephones to the officers at the gate to warn them of the outbreak.

The gravity of the trouble is emphasized when Chief Officer Smale, who was in his office at the time of the outbreak, comes in with confirmation that the men have left the parade grounds, and suggests that an armed guard be brought down the drive. This drastic step is vetoed by both Colonel Turner and the governor, who are anxious to avoid anything that may result in bloodshed, and they decide that the officers shall try to get the men back into their cells. The impracticability of this, however, is that the officers are split into parties of twos and threes, armed only with their batons, and are unable to stem the torrent. The governor suggests that the police be sent for, but Colonel Turner thinks it better to wait before taking that step, and the governor acquiesces.

The storm breaks on the office almost at the moment Chief Officer Smale is explaining that two or three prisoners have told him the ringleaders demand that the men in the punishment cells shall be liberated, and have asked him to inform the governor. Mr. Roberts, with Colonel Turner's acquiescence, emphatically refuses to entertain the request.

Shouts and imprecations and the crash of stones through the windows signal the opening of the attack by the mutineers, and a fusillade of missiles follows. The temper of the mob and the consequent danger of the situation are all too obvious, and the governor and Colonel Turner decide to remain in the office, endeavour to regain control, and retain telephone communication. But the position becomes momentarily more menacing. The stone-throwing

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is a barrage preparatory to the rioters “going over the top.” With a rush they come through the archway and belabour one of the doors with their weapons. The locks are outside, and an officer has come in to ask permission to lock the doors, but when Officer Gilbert attempts to do so he is hustled away by the rioters.

Meantime the deputy-governor, learning that a number of men are rushing towards the entrance to the prison, is able to ‘phone to Officer Large at the lodge, giving him an order to man the gate with rifles, but not to send arms inside. The office is becoming untenable owing to the flying glass and stones. The rioters continue to shout for Colonel Turner, who decides to go out to them. The governor remains in the office, because it is thought that, having regard to his reception in the chapel on Saturday, it is unwise for him to go out.

There is only one way of leaving the beleagured offices—by a window at the back, and Colonel Turner, with Chief Officer Smale, climbs through, and goes round to the archway, where he is met by a body of rioters in front of the governor’s office. He walks towards them with his hands on his hips—an attitude which is habitual with him—but it causes the mutineers to assume that he is armed, and he is assailed with a volley of stones and sticks, and saluted with a volume of shouts and gesticulations. But even when some of the mutineers make a rush for him and pin him against the wall of the governor’s office, he does not quail. Holding up his hand, he signifies that he wants to speak to the rioters.

The courageous gesture is disregarded, and while he is hemmed in against the wall one of the convicts goes through his pockets. The man is searching for keys with which to release the prisoners in the separate cells, but in the process he relieves Colonel Turner of

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his cigarette-case, spectacles' case, gold watch-chain, and other articles of lesser value. Whether he has obtained the porridge for the purpose of using it in this way, or of producing it to prove its inferior quality at any interview that may be granted, is not clear, but one of the prisoners attempts to pour it over the Assistant Commissioner. What is intended for his head, however, is diverted to the sleeve of his coat, through the action of a loyal prisoner.

Several other loyal convicts intervene, and there is an ugly scene. Three or four loyalists thrust themselves between Colonel Turner and the mutineers and hold the latter back, while other friendly prisoners urge him away. Some of the rioters are calling for a hearing for him ; the " friendlies " are insistent that he shall retreat to safety ; and realizing that it is useless trying to address the men, and finding himself pushed in front and pulled behind, he allows himself to be drawn away and into A Hall. There Colonel Turner, Officer Lamb, and four convicts enter a cell and, locking themselves in, remain for half an hour.

During this time some of the prisoners arrive (one of them wearing the deputy-governor's hat) and inform Colonel Turner that they think if he will come along and allow the men to air their grievances it may stop the trouble. The Assistant Commissioner is prepared to go, but as he starts, a prisoner suggests that he will go along and see that all is safe. Within a minute he returns and shouts through the door, which is locked, " Don't let Colonel Turner out," and the latter is dragged back.

Stoned by the rioters, Chief Officer Smale goes to B Hall but, after remaining ten minutes or so, leaves, and is met by the medical officer who, having regard to the threats he has heard uttered against Mr. Smale, advises him to go to the hospital.

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Some of the defenders of Colonel Turner do not come out of the scuffle lightly. Two or three of them are roughly handled by the rioters, who resent not only their intervention in protecting Colonel Turner but also their original refusal to join in the riot. Several of them, belaboured with pickshafts and other weapons, are knocked down ; one suffers a broken wrist, another a dislocated arm, and others cuts and bruises.

While one section of the mutineers are engaged in this episode, another is continuing the assault on the offices, and it is only a matter of minutes before the windows are so wrecked that the storming party is able to clamber through and into the governor's room. Mr. Roberts and the deputy-governor, having barely time to make their exit, slam the door in their faces, and then escape from the building by the same back window as Colonel Turner had used.

It is obvious that the mob is so out of hand, that no reasoning will have any effect on them, and it is equally plain that the governor and deputy-governor have no hope, unaided, of regaining control. They, therefore, hold a hurried consultation and decide that it will be wiser for all concerned for them to take shelter for the moment. To that end they enter the old prison, the keys of which are in the deputy-governor's possession. They lock themselves in, and on two officers passing the prison the governor and deputy-governor give them notes, prepared the previous day, and containing full instructions (with 'phone numbers) to telephone to the Chief Constable of Devon and the Chief Constable of Plymouth. One of the officers carries his note through to the gate ; the other is prevented by convicts, who chivy him away.

Mr. Roberts and Mr. Richards having, as they hope, succeeded in summoning the police, are forced

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to wait until they can establish further communication, and presently two other officers come along. One is immediately dispatched with further messages, and the other remains and assists the governor and deputy-governor to make preparations to defend the staircase against attack by the mutineers. Any possibility of disablement or capture has to be avoided, because the governor has in his pocket the key of his safe, in which all the spare keys of the prison are kept.

Here the officers remain until their release on the arrival of the police, for help has been summoned before the governor's messenger reaches the gate. Being impressed with the gravity of the situation, and concerned by his inability to get into communication with his superiors, Officer Dowse, after receiving instructions to arm the gate, has, on his own responsibility, 'phoned to the Chief Constable of Plymouth and the Chief Constable of Devon, as well as to the military at Crownhill.

With the offices vacated by the chief officials, the rioters take full command and demonical furies are loosed. Furniture is smashed, documents are destroyed, the fire is raked from the grate into the room and the governor's chair and basket are placed on it ; the table is dragged out, and the whole consigned to flames. With the assistance of loyal convicts, however, officers succeed in extinguishing the fire.

Following the scene between Colonel Turner and the mutineers, the cry is raised, "Let's go to the officers' mess!" But first the mob raid the fire station, and on their way smash every pane of glass in the Wesleyan chapel. They drag the fire-engine from the station, and pushing it down the slope, wreck it against the wall, also appropriating the nozzles from the hose, and the drawbars from the engine. Their purpose is to render the engine unusable ; they do not know that the hydrants, with the man-

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power available to work them, are much more effective for fire-fighting.

With the drawbar of the engine the rioters break the door of the officers' mess. Here they smash cupboards, break open cases, and appropriate cigarettes. Lemonade is a tame find, but a welcome change from the usual prison beverage. There are no spirits, and the beer barrels, proving a tantalizing disappointment, are thrown out. The four gallons of liquor they contain are scarcely sufficient for the invaders to squabble over, and certainly not enough to attract the mob. The officer in charge is helpless, for when he intervenes he is threatened by one prisoner with the nozzle of a fire-hose. Suddenly the report of a rifle shot is heard and the rioters run out, but not before they have wrecked the unoffending clock and left behind a pair of fire tongs, a lump of granite, a quantity of nails tied in a handkerchief for use as a weapon of offence, an iron bar, and a fire-hose nozzle. The single officers' quarters also are invaded and ransacked, anything considered of value being taken by the rioters.

Here is the Rev. F. S. Scholes, Wesleyan minister, who, having waited in his chapel with his organist and chapel orderly (both convicts), together with an officer, and being disappointed of his morning service, is making for the hospital. He is in the act of opening the gate, when five of the rioters stop him, and demand his keys. He is resolute in his refusal to surrender them, but they stand on no ceremony and wrench them from him. In the struggle he falls to the ground, losing his spectacles, but suffering no injury personally. There is a mixture of force and courtesy in the methods of the rioters, for one of the men picking up Mr. Scholes's spectacles, hands them to the owner with a considerate, "You will want these, Mr. Scholes." Another asks the minister to go to the governor and

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persuade him to listen to their complaints, but the deputy medical officer, Dr. Richmond, seeing Mr. Scholes being assisted from the ground by prisoners, pulls him into the hospital, where he is immune from further molestation.

Having obtained the keys, the mutineers race to the separate cells, shouting, "We want 'Speadles'!" a prisoner known by that name. They demand the release of the men under punishment, of whom there are about a dozen in the cells. Again there is no response. But the jingling of keys warns the officers that this time the intruders will not leave without getting inside. Theirs is the "open sesame," and gates and doors having been unlocked, the rioters swarm in. Some of them menace the officers, but a friendly prisoner intervenes with a threat to "fix" any one who "hits down any of the 'screws' here."

This is sufficient to sober down men bent on personal violence, and the officers are told by their defender that they will have to do what the rioters want. Faced with a mob of fifty or sixty hostile men, they decide to bow to the inevitable and unlock the cells. Some of the prisoners, however, do not join the mutineers, but remain in their cells.

One of the men on leaving his cell is honoured with a mock salute and the greeting, "Come on, Alec, now is your time. We have command of the prison ; the ropes and ladders are ready."

But the wreckers are not content with the release of prisoners. They indulge their passion for destruction. The adjudicator's office is ransacked. The windows are smashed, the cupboards are broken and the contents taken. The medicine-chest is smashed and piled in front of the fire, where several coats and mackintoshes are set alight. The clock appears to annoy one of the intruders. Possibly it has jarred

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on his nerves when he has been an occupant of a separate cell. Seizing a water-can, he hurls it at the clock and brings it crashing to the floor.

The scene within the prison walls beggars description. Men are rushing about armed with all sorts of weapons, destroying all that comes within their path, until there is little beyond the great prison halls remaining to be wrecked. Scarcely a sound pane of glass is to be seen. Sash boards are torn away and thrown to the ground. A drainpipe is ripped from the guttering, apparently for use as a weapon. The windows of the Church of England chapel and vestry are smashed ; so are those of the other chapels ; the glass of the greenhouses is in fragments, pedestals and flower urns are overturned, the ground is strewn with broken furniture, typewriters, cigarette cartons, match boxes, lemonade bottles, empty beer barrels, bits of rag from the prisoners' pockets, pick shafts, iron bars, and general débris.

Everybody is now supplied with cigarettes, and the mutineers are in generous mood. They desire others to share their new-found luxuries. One officer feels that his dignity is offended by the offer of a cigarette by a rioter ; not so sensitive, the medical officer accepts a "fag" with a courtesy equalled only by the politeness of the man who offers it. One wag tells an officer that if he will not have a cigarette he may as well have the coupons ! Here is a musician trying to extract sweet music from a battered instrument, and essaying variations of "The Red Flag." At the top of the drive prisoners are dancing in couples, and one man is jazzing in a style that stamps him as an expert, and singing, "I was dancing with tears in my eyes." Another waves an apology for a flag.

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Here struts a mutineer wearing the deputy-governor's trilby ; there, another has donned an officer's cap and mackintosh. Over the way goes a man carrying a huge tubular metal hook shaped like an S, and with a rope dangling from the smaller end. Eight or nine men raise a pole against the end of the hospital, and one man shins to the top. With a shout, "guns !" he slithers down, and the pole slipping with him, he makes an undignified landing !

Elsewhere officers are endeavouring to shepherd numbers of men who decline to join in the riot. The smoker's shed and yard have become a rendezvous for such men—and for others who want to see all that is to be seen, perhaps have a hand in it, and yet from time to time keep touch with the loyalists, so that they, too, when the time comes, may be classed as loyalists. The officers have a difficult task, for the men are jumpy. They would welcome the opportunity of getting into the halls, but doors are locked and the keys not available. From the windows of B2 hall the officers in charge of the party that entered soon after the outbreak watch the strange scene, and certainly have an easier task than their colleagues who are outside. Some of the officers are roughly handled, but often find defenders among their loyal charges, and even among the rioters themselves.

A favoured form of assault by mutineers is butting an officer in the face. Imagine a bullet head banging you, with all the driving force of a stodgy body behind it, between the mouth and eyes, and the assurance that "it is not exactly a kiss" may be amusing to the man who has escaped it, but is certainly not comforting to the victim.

"For God's sake get out, or they will kill you," is the appeal of the friendly prisoner, and realizing

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that discretion is the better part of valour, the officer goes. Some of the officers are struck with pickshafts, or thrown to the ground. Others are hit with bottles and stones. One officer finds himself "driven back by some unseen force," and by stones and missiles.

Attempts to escape are very tentative. A ladder from the fire station is raised against the boundary wall, and a rioter ascends to reconnoitre. He is unlucky, for as he raises his head above the wall he faces Officer Friend covering him with a six-chamber revolver. The prisoner immediately drops down, informing his fellows that officers with guns are on the other side. Stones, a broom, and a pickshaft go hurtling over the wall in the hope that they will find an unseen mark in an armed officer who stands between the throwers and freedom.

The rioters, however, are not accepting uncorroborated evidence, and a second man climbs the ladder, and peeps over the wall. He, too, faces the inexorable officer and revolver, and deciding that discretion is the better part of valour, drops back, and all idea of escape by this party is abandoned.

Another prisoner who climbs a ladder raised against the wall, is startled by the report of a rifle fired by an officer on the roof of the guardroom, and scrambles down so hurriedly that he falls on his back, and for the moment lies staring heavenward, stupidly fearing he has been hit.

There are officers outside armed with rifles, and, acting upon orders to shoot should any one attempt to escape, one of them has climbed a tree, and others are posted at points whence they command certain parts of the prison. Presently they play their part.

Reinforced by the party from the separate cells the rioters around by the boundary walls are even

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more demonstrative and excited. One of the leaders climbs a stokehole pipe with the object of addressing the mob, who, however, are too intent on what the majority appear to regard as a gigantic rag to listen, and he scrambles down. Later, he mounts the twine shed roof, and the cry goes up "get the ropes from inside, boys!" With a broom he smashes the glass of the skylights. He is warned by officers to get off the roof, but declines to obey. Three or four rifles bark. Officers outside are firing above the prisoner's head as a warning. Contemptuous of danger, he disregards them, but suddenly he sags. Struck in the back of the neck, he drops and slithers to the edge of the roof.

Another prisoner goes to his aid and the wounded man is lifted down. A shot passes over the second man, and he, too, starts breaking glass, apparently in protest. More shots, and the man puts his thumb to his nose and spreads his fingers. "Cocking a snoop" is his last gesture, for another rifle cracks, and with a cry, "I'm shot, boys," he sinks down and rolls to the edge of the roof.

A third man climbs to the roof to assist in getting the second down. Shots still ring out, and the crowd protest that he is helping the wounded man, who is also lifted down. The shed is situate about thirty yards from the boundary wall, and although it is not possible to make a direct escape from it, the officers believe the object of the prisoners is to obtain ropes for use in attempts to break prison: hence the shooting.

Suffering, as is subsequently revealed, from laceration of the brain, and obviously in a critical condition, the first man, M—, is carried to the hospital. The scene becomes more Dantesque. A weird procession of men in convict garb moves slowly along carrying their stricken comrade. They are presently joined

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by the chaplain, and some of the escorting mutineers are still armed with their weapons.

As the party pass the chief officer's office, flames burst from the window. The cry goes up, "They have killed one of ours ; murder them." The mob is incensed, and bent on further mischief. While M—— is being admitted to the hospital they gather round and smash the windows. The gates are opened, and as the wounded man is being carried in some one throws a piece of wood, in which fragments of glass are embedded, and it strikes and injures Officer Soper in the head. The wood has been used for breaking windows.

Hell-cats snarl and spit. The whole of the administrative block is fired and doomed to destruction, for although now and then spasmodic attempts are made to combat the flames no organized effort is directed to that end, for the feeling of the officers is that "it would be suicidal for us to go among the prisoners, in the frenzy they are in at this moment, with appliances to put out the fire." The governor's office is again attacked, and the incendiaries make certain the officers shall not extinguish the flames a second time. They see the premises are well ablaze before leaving them.

The records office is entered and here the opportunity of destroying records, in the hope that they shall never again be used against prisoners, is conceived. Whether they know there are no duplicates elsewhere is not apparent, but at all events they are determined that the originals shall be destroyed. They carry bundles of records outside and build a bonfire. This is set alight, and one of the mutineers makes doubly sure by lifting the burning mass with an iron bar, so creating a draught. Some of the burning records are borne into the office, which is soon in flames.



THE ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCK IN FLAMES DURING THE MUTINY OF JAN 24th, 1932



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The schoolmaster's office is invaded, the locked doors being smashed in. Here the schoolmaster and his deputy, Officers Palmer and Milton, are at work. They are threatened, but friendly prisoners intervene in their behalf, replying to the cry, "They have killed one of our cloth ; do them in !" with the demand, "Let them go, there are worse than they." The officers' friend advises them to clear off for their own safety, and seeing nothing for it but to accept the advice, they make their way to the main gate, leaving the incendiaries to complete their work of destruction by setting the office alight with torches made from records.

The chaplain's office is also on fire, and the whole block is involved. The men in D hall are asked to come out to help fight the fire, but are too "nervy." They will not leave the shelter of the building because they fear the vengeance of the mutineers. Isolated attempts continue to be made to fight the flames, and the chaplain (Rev. A. Lester) and two convicts are engaged in a forlorn hope. Using buckets, they pour water on the fire, but their work is in vain. The flames have obtained too great a hold.

The kitchen is also the scene of attack. Here fifteen convicts are engaged in preparing food so far as they are able amid the noise and excitement of the riot. Suddenly an iron bar crashes through a window, and the resounding blows of a sledge-hammer upon the lock of the door are heard. The rioters pass cigarettes through the broken window to their comrades inside, and the iron bar which has come through is handed back. It is clear that the wreckers will soon be in, and the officers are advised, in their own interests, to leave. They act on the advice, but before going lock the knives in a cupboard. No hand is raised against them by the convict cooks.

The mutineers have now forced an entry, one

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man wielding a sledge-hammer and another an iron bar, having broken down the iron gate barring the approach to the kitchen. They commandeer food. The thrills of the morning have sharpened their appetites, and appreciating the unusual experience of selecting what they please they feed well, and if they squabble a little over titbits they regard that as their affair. The locked cupboards are broken open, and a couple of knives taken, but these are used for no more serious purpose than the cutting of meat and bread for sandwiches. Cheese and rice puddings are appropriated and eaten.

The kitchen, too, provides the rioters with a new weapon, for one of them seizes a rolling-pin and bears it away, his triumphant mien indicating that he regards it more as the sceptre of power than an instrument of offence !

From the windows of the boiler-house the officer in charge and the convict-engineer watch the riot, and when it is evident that the wreckers are turning their attention to this building, the latter suggests plans for concealing the officer and holding them at bay. Closed and locked doors are no bar to the rioters, for they crash their way through as they have done so many times elsewhere. But here they are checkmated as they have been nowhere else. They are driven back and seek the protection of the open air against a cloud of scalding steam hissing from the gauge, which the convict-engineer smashes the moment they enter in response to the call, "Come on, let's blow it up !" The blowing, however, is on the other side. Officers now arrive, and, as the mutineers refuse to leave, one officer fires low, and by an unfortunate mischance wounds, though not severely, in his left arm, the resourceful prisoner-engineer.

But the paroxysms of destruction and disorder are

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exhausting themselves. Sober thought or fear of the consequences is exerting itself, perhaps because no one has been able to break the bounds of prison, and after a couple of hours' "freedom" the rioters find themselves prisoners still. "I regard it as foolish of the men to smash the place, because I realize it will only be a question of a moment before the police or the soldiers will arrive," moralizes one man (as he subsequently states). He tries to get the men to believe this as well, and urges an officer to address them, telling him that they do not want terms other than those to which they are entitled: "Fair play, better food, and no victimization."

The cry is taken up by others. A band of nearly a score of men make their way up the drive and appoint a deputation to go to the front gate and ask officers to come down and speak to them. "We want to surrender conditionally," the officers are informed, and conditions chorused are, "Better food and no victimization."

The mutineers are advised to fall in on parade, and one of their number, a bugler, sounds the "fall in" on a band instrument. Officers go to seek Colonel Turner to submit the terms to him, but are met by another mob sweeping through the opening from D hall to the main drive, and shouting, "We will not surrender." They have heard of the offer to hoist the white flag, and being the stronger force gain their way.

But the sands are running out for the mutineers. While the central block is ablaze, roofs are crashing in and clouds of smoke rising to the heavens, and with the crack of rifles signalling to whole moorside that foul work is afoot in the prison, a motor bus is speeding over the steep hills carrying thirty police from the Plymouth city force. Receiving the 'phone message from Officer Dowse at ten o'clock, the chief

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constable assembles his men, makes arrangement for their transport, and speeds off in his own car, arriving at the prison within three-quarters of an hour of receipt of the S.O.S. Mr. Wilson finds a number of warders holding the gates, and the central block in flames. His first act is to telephone to Plymouth for the fire-engine and crew. His next, to call up the brigade-major of the 8th Infantry Brigade, and ask him to despatch two companies of infantry to Princetown, and make the necessary arrangements for their transport.

This force, however, is not required, for Mr. Wilson, after quick inquiries, and receiving from the deputy medical officer, who is at the hospital, a telephone message as to the state of affairs in the prison, grasps the nettle. His men have arrived, their bus having covered the sixteen or seventeen miles' climb over the moor in twenty-three minutes. There is also a number of Devon county police under Superintendent Smith, of Crownhill. Mr. Wilson decides on a baton charge, but fearing the mutineers may have obtained possession of firearms, he instructs prison officers, who, he decides, shall accompany the police, to carry their rifles and use them.

The gates are opened, and with a friendly prompting rather than a stern order, "Now, boys, at them!" the chief, in his plus fours and sports jacket, leads in his men with drawn truncheons, his own baton being an ash stick with a gnarled head. With this weapon the chief lays about him, with one result that subsequently a prisoner ruefully complains that Mr. Wilson's baton was four feet in length! Superintendent Smith, wearing a constable's helmet, uses a baton just as vigorously and effectively.

At first the rioters show fight with a shower of stones, but it is an expiring effort. Under the blows of a young and sturdy band of police the wreckers

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go down, and unfortunately some of the loyalists with them, for in the "drive" it is impossible to distinguish between the two sections. Even men who protected Colonel Turner and other officers have cracked skulls, for, shut out of the halls, they have remained in and near the smokers' shed, and rioters, at the last, intermingle with them in the hope of escaping identity as such.

Within a few minutes organized resistance is shattered, the prisoners surrender in batches, and in less than a quarter of an hour all are rounded up and confined to their halls.

The great *émeute* is at an end, and all that remains is for the fire brigade to master the fire and prevent its extension to other buildings. Arriving at 11.30 a.m., it pours tons of water on the burning offices. The central block is doomed, and after about two hours the clock tower and its bell succumb to the flames, and fall crashing among the ruins. It is not until 7.30 in the evening that the brigade's work is complete.

With the fire brigade are sections of the St. John Ambulance at Plymouth. Motoring under sealed orders, and with no knowledge of their mission except that they must follow the fire brigade, they reach the prison, set to work, and render first aid to fifty casualties.

Causes of official satisfaction are : there has not been a single escape, nor any loss of life, though one convict (shot on the twine-shed) is seriously, though not fatally, injured, and not one of the wounds inflicted on officers arises from the use of knives or sharp instruments. The total casualties, numbering about seventy, are classified thus :

Prisoners : Baton wounds, 23 ; shot wounds, 7 ; injuries inflicted by fellow-prisoners (in hospital), 2 ; suffering from general bruises, sprains, burns, and

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laceration, 9 ; in addition, several suffering from injuries inflicted by fellow-prisoners.

Officers : Incapacitated by injuries and on the sick-list, 4 ; suffering from less serious injuries of various kinds, 15 to 20.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GREAT *EMEUTE*: AFTERMATH AND INQUIRY

THE mutiny had its inevitable aftermath. Some of the rioters took their defeat badly, and the ringleaders gave a considerable amount of trouble. They vented their feelings by shouting and singing in protest against their segregation in D hall. For some days practically the whole of the prisoners were confined to their cells, and outdoor labour was suspended. The routine work of the farm, such as caring for the horses, milking the cows, and feeding the stock generally was carried out by officers, assisted by students from the Seale-Hayne Agricultural College at Newton Abbot.

The staff was reinforced by officers from other prisons, and numbers of police remained on duty within and without the prison, and also patrolled the roads over the moors, because of rumours of "old lag" confederates of the mutineers being in the neighbourhood. Motorists and motor-cyclists were stopped and questioned by the police, and at night improvised barricades, with sentry-boxes and braziers of coke fires, were raised on the main road above and below the prison entrance. The object, of course, was to facilitate the work of the police in stopping and examining vehicles and drivers.

On the Monday evening (the day following the *émeute*, a detachment of the 2nd Battalion Worcester Regiment was transported from Crownhill Barracks

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to the prison and posted at intervals along the adjoining roads. The men, stiff with cold and boredom, passed a cheerless night, saw nobody except a few journalists—like themselves and the police doing night duty, though of a different nature—and in the morning were withdrawn, while the whole of Dartmoor and naval, military, and civilian Plymouth wondered! Although the idea of troops “standing by” was fostered in the Press for days, it was only an idea, and nothing more was seen of the gallant Worcesters except in their proper sphere at Crownhill.

It was not surprising that questions were asked in the House of Commons regarding the employment of troops, and the explanation given by the Home Secretary was that a small force of soldiers were stationed outside the prison because the officers sent to relieve the prison staff had not yet arrived. The night was foggy, and there was some nervousness in the locality. Assistance was given for one night only, but special police precautions had to be continued for some time because, said the Home Secretary, there were reports, “which might or might not have been well founded,” of the possibility of organized attempts to escape, with assistance from outside the prison. The position was complicated by the presence of a number of strangers in the neighbourhood, some of whom might have been there for an illicit purpose.

Another piece of information given to the House of Commons by the Home Secretary was that the damage done to the prison buildings during the outbreak was estimated at £3000—a very modest valuation.

It was in an atmosphere still tense that Mr. du Parcq conducted his inquiry, and did it as expeditiously and thoroughly as possible. He examined staff and convicts alike, the prisoners being divided

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into two groups—those upon whom no suspicion rested of complicity in the disorder, and those who were closely confined after the disturbance, and upon whom fell more or less grave suspicion of their being concerned in it. Some of the former gave evidence, or volunteered written statements. None of the latter was called, though Mr. du Parcq visited eight or nine, and while explaining to each that he was not concerned with his guilt or innocence, and did not wish him to say anything about the disorder, he thought it fair to give him an opportunity of bringing before him (the Commissioner) any complaint he had of grievances which in his view contributed to cause the trouble. The majority spoke freely on the topic.

In his report to the Home Secretary, Mr. du Parcq goes back to 1923, when the number of convicts in the prison was 570. At the time of the mutiny it was 440. The decline followed a decision, subsequent to 1923, to remove to Parkhurst the younger and less persistent offenders, and to reserve Dartmoor for recidivists, *i.e.* persons who have served more than one sentence of imprisonment. "It is not very wide of the mark to say that the convict at Dartmoor is either a confirmed criminal or a dangerous criminal, or both," reports Mr. du Parcq. "This must be qualified, however, by adding what is equally true, that the confirmed criminal, and even the criminal who is dangerous outside, is often a good prisoner. The 'old lag' is usually law-abiding in prison. His chief object is to get through his term as quickly and with as little trouble as possible.

"In the last few years a type of prisoner has made his appearance at Dartmoor, who perhaps may be described most conveniently as being of the 'motor-bandit' or 'gangster' class. Sentences upon these men are necessarily severe. They are usually young, determined, and adventurous. Speaking of one of

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them, Major Morris described him as a 'leader of men,' and this description may well be applied to others also. Their qualities, directed into evil channels, have made them great powers for evil, and with many years of monotonous imprisonment facing them they may well think it worth while to take great risks.

"They are dangerous men in two ways : first, because they will be prepared to take great risks themselves to regain their liberty ; secondly, because they are capable of exercising great influence over the weaker-minded prisoners. In any prison, and certainly in Dartmoor, there are many men of a very low order of intelligence and of very weak will.

"It is probably true to say that unless prisoners are to be kept permanently in solitary confinement, there will always be ample opportunity for communication between them. The 'old lag' learns to talk without moving his lips. At exercise, on sick parades, and other necessary parades, and in the workshops, talking may be discouraged, but it cannot be stopped. In chapel many communications pass under the cloak of prayers and hymns. For about the last ten years insistence on silence has been less imperative than it was formerly. Some officers think that the greater liberty has been a mistake, but most of them have no fault to find with it. I came to the conclusion that the source of trouble is to be found elsewhere.

"Given the possibility of communication between prisoners, the prospect of an attempt to escape or mutiny succeeding must depend largely on two factors : (1) the strength and reliability of the prison staff ; (2) the site and character of the present building.

"In regard to the first, the staff in uniform consists of 139 men in all. Of these 23 are temporary officers

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engaged on night duty, and in connection with the central heating and the like. There has been some reduction in the staff, partly owing to the need for national economy, partly because of the reduced number of convicts. The criticism was made by two of the officers whom I examined," comments Mr. du Parcq, "that the prison was understaffed, but I did not find much complaint on this score, and it would seem difficult to justify a larger staff. The reduction has, however, had one result, which I consider unfortunate, viz. that the hours of work has been somewhat reduced and the hours of cellular confinement increased. A prisoner spends fourteen to sixteen hours in his cell, and his working day is not more than about five and a half hours. During work, *e.g.* in the tailor's shop, one officer has to supervise about twenty men. No doubt in these circumstances the vigilance of the staff is often eluded, and articles appear to have been manufactured surreptitiously in the workshops for illegitimate purposes.

"I think, however, that unless a wholly disproportionate number of officers is employed there will always be a risk that the cunning of the convicts will defeat the vigilance of officers. Similarly, it is impossible to provide enough officers to ensure that in the event of trouble the prisoners could be immediately overpowered by their guards. Officers, while in charge of working parties, are armed with truncheons. Guns of an old pattern are available for use to prevent escapes, but it is considered by the Prison Commissioners, and I think rightly considered, that it would be a mistake to arm warders otherwise than as policemen are armed. Guns are carried by night patrols.

"The real security against attack lies in the power of discipline and in the convict's belief that if he attempts violence he must in the long run be over-

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powered by superior forces, when condign punishment will await him."

On the character of the staff, Mr. du Parcq says, "When so much depends upon discipline being maintained, it is plainly essential that the officers should be men of the highest character and reliability. This is doubly important when it is remembered that an untrustworthy officer may be the means of communication between the prisoner and the outer world. It is an unfortunate fact that from the point of view of most of the officers in the service, Dartmoor is an unpopular prison. Princetown is a small place, with few amenities to offer except those which Nature has provided. The staff and their wives find the surroundings dull. To find amusements or large shops it is necessary to go to Plymouth, seventeen miles away, and that is an expensive matter.

"A still more unfortunate fact is that it has come to be regarded by some of the officers as 'a great punishment' to be sent to Dartmoor, not because of any complaint as to the prison, but because 'the surroundings and place are terrible.' I understand that it is already the practice to try to make service at Dartmoor popular (*a*) by appointing officers, when possible, whose families live in the neighbourhood; (*b*) by paying 'inconvenience money' to the staff, and that after ten years' service the officer is entitled to be transferred elsewhere.

"It is clearly important that everything possible should be done, if Dartmoor is to remain open as a convict prison, to cause the officers to regard the service there as a privilege rather than a punishment. In two instances recent enough to be remembered by most of the prison staff, officers from other prisons who have been suspected, and only suspected, of offences there (in one case of 'trafficking,' *i.e.* conveying contraband articles to prisoners) have been

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transferred to Dartmoor. On the other hand officers under suspicion at Dartmoor have been transferred to other prisons.

"I realize the great difficulty of dealing with officers against whom there is cause of mere suspicion, but I think that Dartmoor is now a prison to which an officer who is not above suspicion should not be sent," comments Mr. du Parcq. "Such a transfer is naturally resented by the loyal men who constitute almost the whole of the present staff, and at Dartmoor of all places, when one remembers the class of prisoners with whom the warder is brought into contact there, it is essential that officers on the staff should be absolutely trustworthy.

"It would be wrong to suggest that the Prison Commissioners have in any way made it a practice to treat transfer to Dartmoor as a punishment, and I confess myself unable to suggest what employment could suitably be given to an officer against whom there is merely a case of suspicion, but I feel bound to point out the danger of such transfers as the two I have mentioned, because I am satisfied that the presence of a few bad officers has been a contributory cause of the disorder."

Born in 1875, Mr. S. N. Roberts, destined to be governor of Dartmoor, enlisted at the age of nineteen in the Royal Scots Greys, and in 1902 was transferred to the Army Reserve with the rank of acting sergeant-major, having served in the South African War. He then took up secretarial duties in connection with the Botanical Society in London, and later went to West Africa. Returning, he joined the prison service in 1909 as assistant warder, and was sent to a Borstal institution. In 1915 he rejoined the Royal Scots Greys and became Regimental-Quartermaster-Sergeant, serving at home. Later he was given His Majesty's commission as second-lieutenant in the

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Royal Defence Corps. Early in 1919 Mr. Roberts went to Holloway as clerk and schoolmaster, and in December of the same year was appointed governor of Swansea Prison. Later, he was governor at both Leeds and Birmingham, and was promoted to Dartmoor in April 1931.

It is recorded that there had never been any kind of disorder in any prison which Mr. Roberts governed. He was the first governor of Dartmoor who had risen from the ranks of the prison service. His predecessors, at any rate for a long time back, had entered His Majesty's service as commissioned officers.

"It seems that there was at first a little feeling in the minds of some of the junior officers against the appointment of one who had started where they had," comments Mr. du Parcq. "The majority of the officers regarded it as an honour to the service that a man who had been a warder should have won recognition by his merits. Since his appointment I am satisfied that Mr. Roberts' popularity with his staff has steadily grown, and for the best of reasons : they found him 'very fair and just.' "

Some of the prisoners told Mr. du Parcq that among the junior officers there were a few who undermined the authority of the governor by discussing him with prisoners with whom they talked much too familiarly, and the Commissioner observes that "there is such a general feeling among the officers that such irregularities did occur, that I am forced to the conclusion that these prisoners are not greatly exaggerating. Misconduct of this kind is very difficult to detect or prevent. I regret to say that in my own opinion one or more of the staff must have been guilty of offences far more serious and dangerous than even those grave breaches of discipline."

Emphasizing that conviction for offences which may have contributed directly to the disorder would,

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of course, render an officer liable to punishment in a criminal court, Mr. du Parcq says he abstained from calling before him any officer who was under suspicion of such an offence. In his judgment it would have been against the public interest and unfair to any such officer to do so. It would have hampered the proper investigation of any charge that may be made.

One complaint against Mr. Roberts was that his punishments were more severe than those of his predecessors, but Mr. du Parcq reports that, as far as he can judge, "there is no truth in the suggestion that Mr. Roberts erred on the side of severity, while on the other hand, he was certainly no less severe in his punishments than his predecessors."

Colonel Turner, who had visited the prison about once in three months for about fifteen months before the date of the disorder, formed the opinion that the governor had done his work exceedingly well and that the prison was being run very efficiently. When Colonel Turner left the governor's office during the riot to address the men he was firmly confident that he was going to talk them round, and the reputation he had earned for his ability to handle men was such, Mr. du Parcq thinks, as to justify his confidence. Colonel Turner thought it much more likely that the prisoners would make a dead set at the governor than at himself, and confirming this, Mr. Roberts said, "I did not wish to get out as I am sure had I done so my staff, in their loyalty, would have attempted to protect me, and bloodshed would have taken place, and the attempt to save me would have been futile as prisoners were determined to do me serious injury."

The deputy - governor (Captain A. Coombe Richards) joined the prison service from the Royal Air Force, in which he held the rank of flying officer. Having held similar positions at Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubbs, he was appointed to Dartmoor

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in June of 1931. Mr. du Parcq's view is that Captain Richards was a loyal subordinate to the governor, and gave no reasonable cause of complaint to the men.

The two medical officers, Dr. Battiscombe and Dr. Richmond, both carried on their duties during the disorder. They attended to the wounded, and went about the prison without let or hindrance, being treated by the rioters as "non-combatants." They, therefore, had many opportunities of seeing what went on in different parts of the prison, and Dr. Battiscombe provided an interesting analysis of the prisoners :

(a) The absolutely loyal ; some nervous ones who refused to join in at all, and mostly remained in their halls. They helped the staff as occasion offered.

(b) Loyal men who remained outside, but who took an active part in saving the staff from injury and harm.

(c) Men who remained out partly from curiosity, partly through intimidation, partly mischief, but were against violence. These took no active steps in protecting officers, but to some extent acted as a drag on the others, and in that way probably helped considerably.

(d) Men who joined in with enthusiasm, and were probably very active in destruction, etc. These men looked upon the whole thing as a lark, and were hoping to make their escape under cover of the turmoil. On the whole they were opposed to violence, and were certainly opposed to razor-slashing, and decidedly against murder. They would join in a free fight probably.

(e) Finally, the really vicious brutes who were definitely out for blood. At first they were after certain individual officers only, but at the end it was all the staff or any one they could get.

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The site of Dartmoor Prison calls for some comment by Mr. du Parcq. "From the point of view of the prison officer and his family," he says, "Princetown is isolated and desolate. From another point of view the isolation of the prison has its obvious advantages. Unfortunately, however, while Princetown retains, from the officers' point of view, most of the disadvantages of its early isolation, it has become less and less isolated in any sense material to its inviolability as a prison.

" If there are a few desperate men inside the prison, there are also not a few desperate men of their own sort outside. The evidence abundantly satisfies me that, given any possibility of illicit communication between the outside world and the prison, men of the type to which I have referred already as the 'motor bandit' class might be enabled to procure the escape of associates in the prison.

" Further, in so far as the prison can still be said to be isolated, its very isolation is a danger. If there were a substantial body of police or of the military readily available, the prison would, I think, so far as the character and construction of the buildings are concerned, leave little to be desired. As it is, Plymouth is seventeen miles away, and the nearest reinforcements are at Crownhill Barracks, which are not much nearer. In considering the course of events during the last three months it is, I think, necessary to have in mind all these matters."

The general conclusions reached by Mr. du Parcq as the result of his inquiry are :

" 1.—In my opinion, the disorder is not to be accounted for by any recent change in the prison administration on Dartmoor, either in the direction of severity or leniency.

" The chief change introduced (the limitation of the facilities for changing parties) was in my view a

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salutary reform ; in any case, it had nothing to do with the disorder. Nor do I think that the more humane and reformative treatment of prisoners, which has been the aim of prison administration in this country for many years, conduces to disorder, or that there is any reason to suppose that harsher treatment of the convicts would have prevented what took place.

" Two of the officers expressed the opinion that the practice of the Prison Commissioners in allowing authorized visitors to pay visits to the prisoners in their cells, at which no warder is present, constituted a danger.

" The visitors at Dartmoor are for the most part members of Toc H (?Tavistock), or of the Rotary Club at Tavistock (?Plymouth). I am satisfied that they do good work, that their visits are a humanizing and reformatory influence, and that a few men at any rate have been reclaimed through their kindly and public-spirited efforts. It would, in my view, be lamentable if these efforts were stopped or suspended.

" There is, of course, a danger, against which the Prison Commissioners, I am satisfied, make every effort to guard, that a visitor may occasionally be indiscreet. The two visitors who gave evidence before me were, I feel confident, discreet as well as kindly in their dealing with convicts, and I think it unlikely that the conduct of any visitor contributed to cause the disorder.

" 2.—I am satisfied that Dartmoor is an unsuitable prison in which to confine prisoners of the dangerous modern type.

" I think that there is a real danger that attempts at escape might be made by such prisoners in concert with associates outside. There is ground for suspicion that persons outside have been in touch with some of the more dangerous convicts, with a view

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to helping them to escape, and that the fact that disorder was impending was known outside the prison.

" I am satisfied that every suspicious circumstance is being fully investigated by the police, and I have refrained from giving details of such suspicions in this report.

" 3.—I think that there is no doubt that while almost all the officers at Dartmoor are loyal and efficient, a very small number are guilty of irregularities, and worse.

" I desire to make it clear that I make no reflection on the governor for the existence of this state of things. It is no new thing to find that there are strong but unproved suspicions against certain officers. Major Morris told me that in his day 'there were some against whom there was nothing but suspicion, and others against whom there was everything but proof.' As to this also I am satisfied that the fullest investigation has been and will be made.

" 4.—I believe that the prisoners had no substantial grievances, and that such grievances as they had would not have led to any disorder unless a few of the dangerous prisoners, partly by intimidation, had played on the feelings and the fears of others.

" In my view, the belief that Y—— had been cruelly assaulted on Sunday morning made a great many men resentful who would otherwise have been loyal.

" 5.—The governor has been, in my opinion, an excellent administrator, and I believe him to have been just in his dealings with the prisoners. After the disorder had become manifest, I think he made an error of judgment in addressing the men as he did in the chapel on Saturday. I think that a man of exceptionally strong character might have been able to quell the growing disorder by the force of his

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personality. It is, I hope, not a severe criticism of Mr. Roberts to say that he has not this rare gift. He was, I am convinced, most zealous and conscientious in the discharge of his duties.

“ 6.—I think that Colonel Turner and the governor ought to have foreseen the possibility of trouble on the parade ground, and that, if they had felt they could not provide against it, it would have been better not to take the risk of letting out all the prisoners for exercise in the normal way. I think they acted with great wisdom in refusing to allow rifles to be brought into the prison. The facts which I have set out I hope make it clear that Colonel Turner acted with the greatest courage during the disorder.

“ 7.—The Deputy-Governor has loyally supported the Governor and the medical officers showed the greatest possible devotion to duty.

“ 8.—Generally speaking, the chief officer, principal officers, and officers acted in a highly commendable manner, especially when it is remembered that they found themselves scattered and leaderless. Some of them acted with considerable courage, and I attribute the fact that there were no escapes and little serious injury largely to their coolness and discretion. In order not to make unfair distinctions, I have purposely abstained from singling out officers by name for special commemoration.

“ 9.—I am satisfied that some of the convicts acted with great bravery, and that many of them played none but an honourable part in the disorder.

“ I agree in the main with Doctor Battiscombe’s opinion quoted in the report. In the case of the convicts, I have refrained from mentioning names except in a very few instances, but I think there is no doubt that there is sufficient evidence in the possession of the prison authorities to make it certain

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that the conduct of those convicts who behaved courageously and well will be suitably recognized.

"I do not believe that any but a small number of the prisoners joining in the riot had murderous intentions. The fact that although some of them were armed with knives no officer was stabbed, and the further fact that no officer was very seriously wounded is to my mind strong evidence of this.

"10.—I need hardly add that in my view the chief constable and police of Plymouth behaved with commendable promptitude, vigour, and discretion."

The Home Secretary later expressed his appreciation of the extremely valuable help rendered by the police, who, he said, arrived with the utmost promptitude and dealt most efficiently with a difficult situation. Letters of thanks were sent to the chief constables concerned. The Plymouth ambulance men also received the thanks of the Grand Prior of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem for their services.

Of the staff the Home Secretary, speaking in the House of Commons, said he was conveying to them an expression of his appreciation of their behaviour in very trying circumstances. Their conduct was fully in accordance with the high reputation of the British Prisons' service for reliability, courage, and restraint. "This is not the occasion," he added, "to apportion praise or blame to individuals. The House may be assured that as regards the very small number of officers who are mentioned in the report as being suspected of grave misconduct no pains will be spared to obtain all available evidence with a view to proper action."

Subsequently, the difficulties of obtaining corroborative evidence supporting the charges were reported in the House, it being added that it had not been possible to trace breaches of regulations to individuals.

Speaking on May 2 on the prison system of the

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country, and detailing plans for future administration, the Home Secretary said Dartmoor will be reduced to small proportions. It is a costly place to maintain, and it is uncongenial to the staff and their families. A large reduction is being made in the establishments both at Dartmoor and Parkhurst by sending men to local prisons.

For some time reductions in the number of prisoners at Dartmoor were made by transfers to other prisons, until the total fell to 260. Subsequently, however, moves in the opposite direction indicated a reversal of policy and the consequent increase in numbers of both prisoners and staff.

Mr. Roberts was transferred from Dartmoor to the governorship of Cardiff Prison, and Major C. Pannell, who had been governor of the Borstal Institution at Camp Hill, Isle of Wight, became governor at Dartmoor.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A TRIAL UNIQUE IN OUR CRIMINAL ANNALS

**F**Ollowing the publication of Mr. du Parcq's report, attention was directed to the preparation of a case for the prosecution and punishment of the ringleaders of the disorder. For this purpose Superintendent Hambrook and Inspector Drew, of Scotland Yard, spent a considerable period in the prison investigating. The first result of their report to the authorities was that fifteen or sixteen prisoners were brought before the Board of Visitors and charged with what were classed as minor offences. Varying degrees of punishment were inflicted on them, and subsequently some of the offenders were transferred to other prisons.

The next stage was the indictment of men alleged to be concerned in offences of a graver nature. One charged with wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm to Officer Birch, and another with attempting to inflict grievous bodily harm to Officer Udy, were brought before the magistrates at Tavistock and committed for trial. Thirty were arraigned for riotous and tumultuous assembly, and demolishing, or beginning to demolish, public buildings in His Majesty's Prison at Dartmoor.

Much discussion as to the scene of the preliminary magisterial proceedings, and eventually the trial, was resolved by the decision that the Duchy Hall at Princetown should in turn be Police and Assize

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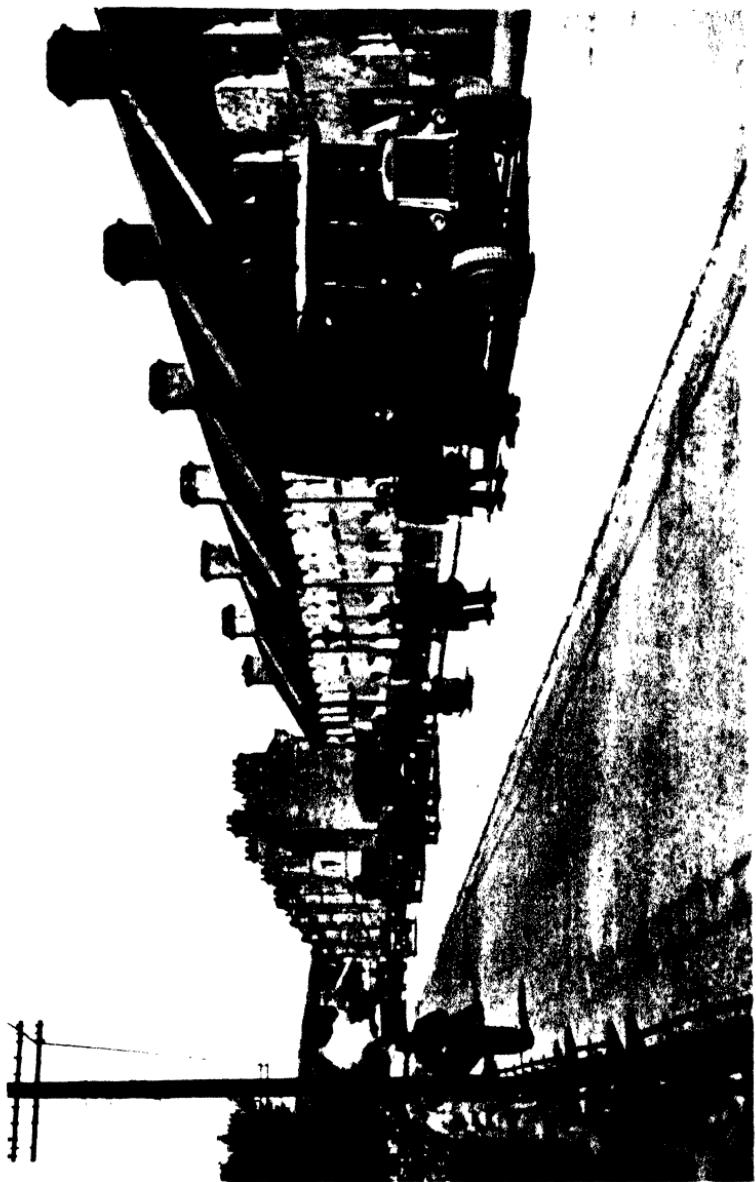
Court. The hall, built by the Duchy of Cornwall, and normally used, as needed, as an assembly room for political and other meetings, concerts, and social events, and as a cinema on certain evenings of the week, was fitted up so that it assumed the guise of a court of law.

The problem of the accommodation of thirty prisoners at one and the same time was solved by the construction in the prison of a dock in sections which were taken to the hall and fitted together. At first, according to published reports, it was to be constructed of steel, the writers having curious ideas of the resources of the prison. When it was eventually revealed to view it was described as of solid oak, the emphasis being laid on the necessity of something extraordinarily strong rather than on the extravagance of such material !

Actually, the dock was of common boarding stained the familiar brown of the modern garden fence, the front and sides being topped with a couple of lengths of gaspipe railing. In this dock the prisoners sat in rows, with prison officers at either end of each seat and other officers at intervals between the men, who, so far from being chained to the dock, as had been vividly pictured, were not even handcuffed.

Immediately opposite was the witness-box, also made in the prison. The magistrates' bench was on the stage, and the "well" of the court provided accommodation for counsel and a table bearing an extraordinary collection of formidable articles used as weapons or instruments of destruction during the riot. About one-third of the hall was assigned to the public.

The accused were conveyed to the prison in two covered motor-lorries, which, with the police escort, formed one of the most unusual processions that could be conceived. The prisoners, packed inside



MOTOR LORRIES, WITH POLICE ESCORT, CONVEYING CONVICTS FROM THE PRISON TO THE ASSIZE COURT IN THE DUCHY HALL, PRINCETOWN.



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the lorries, peered over the shoulders of a screen of four or five prison officers who lined the tail-boards. Riding with the drivers were one or two other officers. Reports that the men were manacled were contrary to fact. Nor were the guards armed. The procession was headed by a police motor-cyclist and police officers in a car, and another car brought up the rear, while on either side of each lorry walked three policemen accompanied by a sergeant. The pace, which had perforce to be regulated to the limits of the walking policemen, was more that of a funeral cortège than of a motor-car parade.

There were more police at the front and rear of the court-house, and the fanciful stories that they were armed provided them with merry jests with which to relieve the monotony of their long and uneventful spells of duty. The lorries were run into the yard behind, and the men stepped from them into the court-house. So orderly was their conduct, that after the first couple of days the walking police escort was taken off and the motors were run to and from the prison at a normal pace.

The men were equally well conducted in court, a fact that drew from the chairman of the bench, Colonel Marwood Tucker, words of commendation. They wore their own clothes, and one was struck by two things—their smart appearance and physical fitness, and their comparative youth. Only two or three were noticeable for grey hair. Several were on the sunny side of thirty years, and all were between the ages of twenty-four and forty-six.

The case was conducted for the Director of Prosecutions by Mr. G. R. Paling and Mr. E. T. Robey, and the defence was by Mr. S. T. James (London), Mr. R. Macdonald, Mr. S. Carlile Davis, and Mr. D. Foot Nash (Plymouth). The proceedings occupied nine days, and at the close the magistrates

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decided that there was no *prima facie* case against one prisoner, and committed the other twenty-nine for trial.

Mr. Justice Finlay was appointed as judge at the Special Assize at Princetown, where the arrangement and equipment of the Duchy Hall for the trial of what was described by his lordship as "a case unique in our criminal annals," were greatly improved. The same dock was used, but the seating, instead of being on the level, was in tiers, so that every man was visible to the jury and witnesses. Immediately opposite, the jury were accommodated in a "box" constructed in the prison. The witness-box was to the left of the jury seats, and between them and the bench. On the latter had been placed one of the Judge's chairs brought from the Castle of Exeter, and above it was fixed the Royal Arms from the County Assize Court.

With the Judge sat the High Sheriff of Devon (Mr. S. Manning Kidd), wearing court dress, and his chaplain (Rev. G. E. Davis). Seated behind the Judge from day to day was a number of privileged persons, including Lady Finlay, and public men of Devon and Cornwall, and their ladies. At a bench dividing the well of the court (where counsel and officials were accommodated) from the seating reserved to the public, journalists wrote their stories. A large plan of the prison hung where it could be seen by the whole court, and an officer with a pointer indicated buildings and positions mentioned in evidence or speeches.

An incongruous touch was a Japanese lantern suspended from the ceiling, left there following a festive gathering because bringing in a ladder to remove it was too arduous a job! Counsel's robing-room was in the schoolroom on the other side of the road.

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The trial was preceded by service, attended by the Judge in state, in the Parish Church. The clergy were headed by the Bishop of Plymouth (Dr. H. J. B. Masterman) and the Vicar (Rev. A. W. Murphy). The 1st Princetown Girl Guides and Wolf Cubs, an unusual parade in connection with an Assize, lined the approach to the church.

The Grand Jury, of which Sir Archibald Bodkin, a former Director of Public Prosecutions, was the foreman, created a precedent as unique as the trial itself by sitting in the dock during the charge of the Judge. They afterwards returned true bills in the cases of the two prisoners charged separately with wounding and attempted wounding, and of the 29 men charged together with riotous assembly and malicious damage.

The counsel engaged were the Solicitor-General (Sir F. Boyd Merriman, K.C., M.P.), Mr. T. J. O'Connor, K.C., M.P., and Sir Percival Clarke, K.C., for the prosecution ; Mr. Hector Hughes, K.C. (in the two individual cases), Mr. S. T. James, with Mr. G. D. Squibb, for 23 of the main body. Mr. Dingle Foot, M.P., Mr. Anthony Hawke, and Mr. Malcolm Wright for others. One prisoner conducted his own defence.

The precise form of the indictment of the mutineers read : "That they on January 24, 1932, at Lydford, in the county of Devon, being riotously and tumultuously assembled together to the disturbance of the peace, feloniously, unlawfully, and with force, did demolish, pull down, or destroy a building devoted to public use, or erected or maintained by public contribution, contrary to Section 11 of the Malicious Damage Act, 1861."

The trials opened on April 28 and closed on May 13. Every phase was in accord with the dignity and scrupulous fairness of English justice Mr.

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Justice Finlay allowed the greatest latitude to the defence, even to the extent of permitting questions which were directed to showing that the prison system was the men's justification, rather than strictly confining it to evidence bearing on the charges. The prosecution, too, did not press evidence to which the defence raised technical objection, the whole object being to give the accused fair trials and not to prejudice them in any way. They were treated just as ordinary persons facing an accusation in court for the first time. Again they wore their own clothes, and at the midday adjournment were provided with a good lunch and cigarettes.

In referring to their good behaviour, the Solicitor-General, in his final address, said nothing had occurred to which objection had been taken. "Some of the credit for that, at any rate, may be given to the men in the dock, who, with some temptation to prolong or even to disturb the proceedings, have conducted themselves in a completely exemplary manner from beginning to end."

The Judge joined in this tribute to the conduct of the men. Addressing the jury he said, "I am sure you rejoice, that never once in the whole of these lengthy proceedings have they failed in that respect which we in England like to think our people always pay to the course of justice."

At one stage of his summing up, Mr. Justice Finlay pointed out that "We have nothing to do with the general prison administration of this country. That is a matter which arouses much interest. It is a matter which perfectly legitimately may be discussed in Parliament or other public places, but your task here is quite different, and it matters not from your point of view whether the prison administration is good or bad, whether there are reforms which might advantageously be made, and whether with reference

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to Dartmoor in particular there were things done which ought not to have been done. I express not the slightest opinion on these matters."

The Judge, however, gave it as his opinion that nobody considered for one moment that anything to do with the food was the real cause of the disastrous outbreak. The causes, he said, whatever they were, must have gone deeper than that.

The jury were about five hours considering their verdict in the riotous assembly case. They found five men guilty of riotous assembly, disturbance of the peace, and demolition, viz. Thomas Bullows, Joseph Conning, James Ibbeson, William Mason, and Frederick Smith.

Sixteen men found guilty of malicious damage were : Harry Burgess, Patrick Cosgrove, James Del Mar, Thomas E. Dewhurst, George Garton, James Horn, John Jackson, Edward James, Patrick Kavanagh, Walter F. Moore, Alexander Muir, Frederick Roberts, Charles J. Sparks, Harry Stoddart, Sidney Tappenden, and Joseph Taylor. One man, William Gardner, had pleaded guilty to malicious damage at the beginning of the trial.

Nine of the accused were found not guilty, and one of them who had completed the sentence he was serving at the time of the outbreak was immediately discharged. The others returned to the prison.

The record of each convicted man was read the following day by Superintendent Hambrook before sentence was passed by the Judge, who gave effect to the jury's recommendations of leniency in the cases of Cosgrove, Del Mar, James, and Kavanagh, and a strong recommendation in favour of Tappenden. The sentences were :

James Ibbeson . . . .	10 years	Frederick Smith . . . .	8 years
Joseph Conning . . . .	10 "	William Mason . . . .	8 "
Thomas Bullows . . . .	8 "	John Jackson . . . .	6 "

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Charles J. Sparks	4 years	Joseph Taylor	3 years
Harry Stoddart	4	James Horn	21 months
Thomas E. Dewhurst	3	Patrick Cosgrove	20 "
George Garton	3	James Del Mar	18 "
Walter F. Moore	3	Edward James	18 "
Alexander Muir	3	Patrick Kavanagh	15 "
Frederick Roberts	3	Sidney Tappenden	6 "
Harry Burgess	3	William Gardner	6 "

Thomas Davis was sentenced to twelve years' penal servitude for feloniously wounding or causing grievous bodily harm to Prison Officer E. Birch.

A verdict of "not guilty" was returned in the case of the prisoner charged with attempting maliciously to wound Prison Officer G. A. Udy.

Each man was brought back to the dock separately, and as soon as sentence was passed on him he was taken to a motor-car, and driven either to Tavistock or Exeter *en route* for a prison in another part of the country, and Dartmoor knew him no more. The object of the authorities was to break up the gang of ringleaders, and to ensure that they should not anywhere have the opportunity of again collaborating in organizing rebellion or attempted escape.

Several of the prisoners made application to the Court of Criminal Appeal for leave to appeal against conviction or sentence, but after hearing the plea of their counsel, the Lord Chief Justice, without calling upon the Solicitor-General to reply, announced that the Court decided that there was not in any of these cases grounds for giving leave to appeal.

"The trial," he said, "was most fairly conducted, and the summing up was admirable and clear. The Judge began, as indeed he ended, with an admirable statement of the law. In the course of a long summing up, Lord Finlay examined with scrupulous care the case of each individual prisoner. It is clear to us that in every one of these cases there was evidence upon which the jury might properly convict."

## A UNIQUE TRIAL

"With regard to the sentences, although no doubt some of them were severe, in our opinion they were necessarily severe, and it does not appear to this court that any of these sentences call for reconsideration. In those circumstances these appeals will be dismissed."

Who should bear the costs of the trial became the subject of discussion by several local bodies, who argued that as Devon was not responsible for the prison, or the confinement in it of the mutineers, it should not be saddled with the expenses, which at a meeting of the Devon Standing Joint Committee were stated to be not so heavy as anticipated, the county's share being less than £2000. In addition, the loss of police time, estimated to represent from £1500 to £2000, did not come into the County Police accounts. Apart from this, the police out-of-pocket expenses were £574, mainly for transport. The taxable costs of the trial amounted to £1350, which was less than expected, partly because the Solicitor-General had not put in any account. His fee, it was stated, would have been very heavy, and apparently the Treasury had not suggested that it should be borne by the county. It was expected, too, that half the amount of the police expenses would be paid by the Home Office.

The plea that Devon should not be required to foot the bill was further justified by the fact that there was only one Devon man in the prison at the time of the mutiny. Neither this, nor any other reason put forward by the members of Parliament for the county, however, proved successful in inducing the Chancellor of the Exchequer to relieve Devon of liability, and he was confirmed in his refusal by the Treasury, who pointed out that the obligations of local authorities were laid down in the Act of 1908, although the position actually dated back to 1888,

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when local funds were provided to carry out this purpose.

The Treasury had never admitted that any distinction could or should be drawn between national and local cases, and recalled that Exchequer grants were refused to local authorities in the cases of the Sinn Fein trials in 1921 and the recent Rouse case, among others. An exception in the Dartmoor case would seriously embarrass the general position. Moreover, the Exchequer had obligations of its own in connection with the trial, and could not, therefore, relieve Devon County of its statutory obligations.

## CHAPTER XIX

### RELEASED " LOYALISTS " CRITICISMS OF PRISON SYSTEM

**F**Ollowing the trial, the Home Secretary dealt with the suggestions contained in Mr. du Parcq's report (that the conduct of those convicts who acted with great bravery during the mutiny should be suitably recognized), and in the report from the Prison Commissioners on the spot. He recommended to His Majesty that their meritorious behaviour should be recognized by way of special remission of part of their sentences. In one case, that of a man serving a life sentence, it was decided that, whereas it had been intended to treat him as if sentenced to twenty years, he would, in view of his conduct on January 24, be treated as if sentenced to fifteen years. The usual good conduct and industry reduction of three months for each year meant that release could be earned after eleven and a half years.

In fifteen cases remissions granted varied from three months to a year and these men were to be released on licence when their sentences, as reduced by the special remissions, had been served. In eleven other cases special remissions varying from three months to two years and ten months had the effect of securing the immediate discharge of the men concerned.

I was at Princetown when the eleven men were released at seven o'clock on a beautiful May morning.

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Smartly groomed and clothed, and carrying their suit-cases, the men walked down the long village street with a bearing that was eloquent of their feeling that it was good to be alive and at liberty in the glorious sunshine. They entered the little train for the run down the zigzag railway to Yelverton, where they changed to Great Western or Southern trains for their journeys to their homes north or east.

From the windows they had their last look at Dartmoor, its brown wastes and rugged tors relieved only here and there by golden gorse, and as yet lacking the green, the purple, and pink that later would clothe them. They saw the moor in one of its softest moods, and unforgettable was the ecstasy of one of the men who had spent a long period in prison when, on reaching Burrator, he jumped from his seat exclaiming, "The first sheet of water I have seen for nine years. Glorious!" The same man produced his watch and studied it as one who had recovered a long-lost friend.

Almost without exception every man smoked a cigarette, and one produced a small packet of a favourite brand, yellowed by age, which he said was sent to him four years previously by his mother. He had received the packet only that morning. When it was delivered at the prison it was placed with his clothes and other belongings, to be handed to him on his release.

"I am going to take that packet home and show it to my mother," he said, when selecting a cigarette to smoke, to his own enjoyment and in appreciation of her thought that had fructified after such a long and weary interval.

The demeanour of the men was in itself a revelation. Some were care-free, gay, and talkative; others quiet and uncommunicative, though amused at the sallies of their comrades. In one corner of the

## RELEASED "LOYALISTS"

compartment sat a man holding a neatly-made, well-ventilated box, in which he had brought from the prison two sleek, shiny-coated field mice.

Although the tiny rodents were a little timid in their strange surroundings, the manner in which they received his caresses confirmed the statements of their owner and other men as to the interest they provide for imprisoned men, and the instinct with which they respond to efforts to train them. Caught young in the fields where the men are at work, the mice are carried back to the cells, fed, petted, and trained, as they grow, to do all sorts of quaint little tricks, even to the carrying of a small flag fastened to a match stick.

As joke and chaff were bandied from side to side of the compartment, all sorts of accents were heard : Cockney, Midland, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Welsh. There were contrasts of the rough expression of the lower spheres of life with the polish of the educated caste. All expressed with varying emphasis pleasure in regained freedom and the nerve-testing tedium of the last night in prison. Too excited to sleep soundly, they needed no call in the morning ; nor had they any craving for their last breakfast in the confinement of their cells. The sight of the margarine was sufficient. "Take it away ; I don't want to see it again," was the cry of more than one.

Some of the men talked of the share they took in protecting or supporting officers during the disorder, but not in boastful terms. They were more concerned with prison conditions, and the causes of the trouble. According to them it was not so much a question of food as the evil influences of certain violent prisoners, and in their opinion peace would not be maintained until such men were moved elsewhere. They professed to believe that out of the mutiny would arise some good in the shape of the

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relaxation of certain phases of the prison system against which men revolt. They were especially condemnatory of what they termed the "rule of silence," insisted on except for periods they thought were inadequate.

"The prison system is terrible," the opinion of one man, was representative of the whole. "Confinement and monotony are bad enough, though we are not whining about that, because, after all, we were paying the penalty, and it was no use rebelling against our medicine. But what we all revolt against is the terrible rule of silence. It appals and oppresses a man, gets on his nerves, makes him resentful, and has a tendency to drive him into a condition of mental instability. Surely this rule might be modified.

"Another cause for discontent is the tobacco rule. You have to serve four years with good conduct before you get any tobacco. At present there are fewer than a score of smokers in a total of 350 prisoners. Surely life might be made a little more tolerable for a long-term man by an occasional smoke being permitted within a shorter period than four years."

"Dartmoor is what you make it. It can be unpleasant, but if you are prepared to take your medicine, well—half the battle is over," was the view of another man.

With such sentiments the men dispersed, and a significant commentary on the fact that prisoners at Dartmoor are in the main recidivists was provided by the conviction in different parts of the country for burglary and sentence of four or five of the released men, and this within two or three months of their liberation. Sentences in two of the cases were the equivalent of or more than the whole of the term remitted as a reward for help rendered to menaced officers, while the third man went back to five years' penal servitude!

## CHAPTER XX

### OFFICIAL SECRECY AND THE SEQUEL

**I**N writing the story of the mutiny I have rejected the unofficial tales of things supposed to have happened which were rife at the time, and relied on the report of Mr. du Parcq and the evidence given both by the prosecution and defence at the trial of the accused men. My reason is that I have aimed at giving as accurate a picture as possible, in view of the charges made in the House of Commons on several occasions by the Home Secretary that "many newspapers have been guilty of drawing sensational material out of non-existing events, and thereby misleading public opinion in general." Further, "The House will join me in condemning the publication of sensational and fictitious reports, which create a false impression at home and abroad of our prison conditions."

While I am not concerned to defend any newspaper that may have distorted facts, I am of opinion that if misleading and sensational statements were published, the authorities, by their short-sightedness, were to some extent responsible. Had a really comprehensive official *communiqué* been issued as quickly as possible after the suppression of the riot, and had it been followed at suitable intervals with similar statements on the situation at the moment, there would have been no justification for sensational stories—the inevitable consequence of the lack of frank and convincing information.

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The disorder was at an end before midday, but it was not until 6 p.m. that the prison authorities received the Press representatives and vouchsafed anything in the nature of news. Even then Colonel Turner made no attempt either to reveal detail or give any general review of the events of the day.

In reply to a question he said he could give no reason or motive for the outbreak. "I can say, however, that there has been some disturbance, which began at 9.30," he continued, "as a result of which the majority of the men got out of control. Determined attempts were made by the convicts to escape, but none succeeded. No officer of the prison and no police-officer was seriously injured, but many convicts are now in hospital more or less seriously injured, some with gunshot wounds, but more as the result of the baton charge of the police. Other convicts may have been treated for injuries. Two or three prison officers were slightly injured but none seriously."

Asked if it were correct that he had been attacked by convicts, Colonel Turner would neither confirm nor deny the story.

Similar reticence was shown in the statement issued from the Home Office a little later the same evening. The *communiqué* was limited precisely to 217 words. It recorded that about 100 of the total population of 400 had broken away, and that the prison staff was for a time unable to obtain control. "No prisoners escaped and none has been seriously injured. About 20 are in hospital with minor injuries. No officer was seriously hurt. A few received minor injuries, but none required to be sent to hospital. . . . Causes of the trouble are unknown."

The following day a second statement was issued from the Home Office. Mainly a repetition or elaboration of the first, its length had been extended

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to about 500 words. Within that compass it was impossible to give an adequate account of what was the gravest mutiny that had ever occurred in the history of the British prison system.

Compare the assertion that "about twenty convicts are in hospital with minor injuries," and "no officer was seriously hurt," with Mr. du Parcq's summary of the casualties—41 convicts suffered from baton, gunshot, and other wounds; as well as several others suffering from injuries inflicted by fellow-prisoners; and four officers incapacitated by injuries, and 15 to 20 others suffering from less serious injuries of various kinds—and the point of criticism becomes clear.

The dominating idea in the official mind controlling the prison system seemed to be to minimize as far as possible the magnitude of the outbreak, and to be as sparing of information as possible. I have heard responsible officials admit that this was a mistake. "I would have given the Press the fullest possible information," said one, "because the public were entitled to it, and the most effective means of reaching the public is still through the newspapers."

There was nothing to be gained by omitting to do so, or by doling out information as though it were fine gold, because the news of the *émeute* was bound to reach the world, and failing an official narrative, sensation was inevitable. The only definite information obtainable at Princetown was that relating to the firing of the buildings, the police charge, and the final suppression of the riot, and that was of a semi-official nature, though not in any way emanating from the prison authorities. Regarding everything else the wildest rumours were afloat, and for a long time it was impossible to discover whether there were any killed among the casualties.

I have had experience of the same kind of official

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reticence when there has been an escape. Seeking information from the highest official source I, in common with other journalists, have been referred to "the notices hanging at the entrance." These notices, of course, merely announced that a certain convict or convicts had escaped, gave names and descriptions, and offered the usual reward for information and capture.

Here the official refusal to give information is inexplicable, and seems to border on stupidity, for the men at large are invariably dangerous criminals, and it is certain from past experience that before many hours have passed they will be committing burglaries in order to obtain clothes, food, and money. Such deeds might at any moment beget violence. Therefore, to the average man or woman the widest possible publicity in regard to the fugitives is but common sense.

Another act by the authorities that provoked sensation and added to the speculation and rumours afloat was the employment of soldiers on guard duty on the night following the mutiny. The reason given subsequently was that "as there was naturally misapprehension among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and some local excitement, the prison authorities on the spot thought it advisable as a measure of precaution that additional assistance should be readily available, and a small party of infantry were accordingly posted outside the prison during the night."

No adequate justification of the need was offered, and the remark of Sir Herbert Samuel that there were reports of the possibility of organized attempts to escape, with assistance from outside the prison, "which might or might not have been well founded," seems to suggest that, like the Scotsman, he had his "doots."

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It was not surprising that in such an atmosphere sensationalism was given a free run. The employment of soldiers, though only for one night, gave rise to the fantastic story that one hundred "old lags" from London's underworld had arrived in Princetown, established, by means of a system of signalling, communication with the ringleaders in the prison, and planned a general escape; that at night mysterious lights flashed and blinked from the neighbouring moor, by day arms and handkerchiefs were waved from the windows of cells, and from North Hessary Tor there was heliographing, with ready response from the imprisoned convicts.

Of course the story of the one hundred "old lags" was ridiculed by everybody with a knowledge of the moor and the possibilities of Princetown, for it needed a very vivid imagination to conceive of such a body of men concealing themselves in the wide open spaces around Princetown or breaking into the fortress-like prison. It is true that here and there a stranger made his appearance, but he proved to be an old stager who was revisiting the scene of his former incarceration, not with the idea of attempting the rescue of any of his old comrades, but of selling a story to any newspaper willing to pay for it.

I recall the first occasion I motored across the moor at night, and saw what appeared to be search-lights sweeping from side to side and often completing the circle. I soon discovered that the travelling beams were merely from the headlamps of a motor-car as it wound along the steep and winding roads. That was the explanation of signalling at night! As to heliographing, the prison is not visible from the top of North Hessary Tor. To get a view of it one has to go down to the edge of the plantation on the shoulder of the tor, where a man heliographing would be in full view not merely of the few prisoners whose

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attention he might be trying to attract, but also of the officials on duty within and without the prison! That would be far too great a risk for any old lag to run.

Apart from the fact that the cell windows are heavily barred on the outside, it was suggested to me by an authority that if the convicts attempted anything in the nature of heliographing it would be between themselves and not with any one outside. The only opening in the cell window, which is of glass, consists of two small sliding panes that permit of little room for signalling or any other operation, and he suggested that possibly a convict may use his mirror to try to signal to other convicts elsewhere in the prison. The cell windows on the upper landings provide a view far over the moor, but any signalling thence could be checkmated by the removal of offenders to cells on other floors, of which there are hundreds unoccupied.

The suggestion that the disorder was the result of communistic effort, and that communists were waiting to assist men to break prison, proved even more fanciful than the old lag theory, and quickly died a natural death, and speculation was presently transferred from the old lag and communist to the men inside. "It must be they who are still plotting and planning to break out," it was argued, "they" being the ringleaders who by this time were segregated so as to be beyond further mischief while awaiting the legal proceedings pending against them.

The type of stories told by convicts released at the time can be judged from that of a man who described how the wreckers broke into the governor's office "where they got hold of a lot of money." "It was funny," he said, "to see the convicts pushing money at each other—in pound notes and two shilling pieces." That this was born of a fertile imagination

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is apparent from the absence from the Commissioner's report, and the charges and evidence at the trial, of any suggestion that money was stolen.

I am inclined to think a deal of leg-pulling was done by individuals other than released convicts from whom information was sought. For example, the master-key story had a great run before it was announced that no such key was missing. Apparently it was based on the word of one person that a certain key had not been found, and it was gravely stated that search was made for it "in thousands of places, so far without success." Incidentally it is of interest that following the round-up by the police one convict indicated a spot near the boundary wall where a bunch of keys would be, and I believe was, found.

A phrase used to describe the behaviour of the mutineers, "they roared like the beasts of the jungle," was made to do duty subsequently when the ring-leaders demonstrated against their segregation, and indulged in shouting, threatening, and singing. It provoked a protest by the Home Secretary that it was a sheer fabrication. Doubtless it was impossible and undesirable for Mr. du Parcq to issue any kind of *communiqué* during his inquiry, but one of the Prison Commissioners on the spot might have done so with special reference to existing conditions. It was because nothing was done in this direction that rumours multiplied, and there was some excuse for error. There was, however, no justification for later developments, when it appeared to become imperative that each week-end certain papers should carry a sensation from Dartmoor. In several instances the result was unblushing invention.

For a time following the mutiny the usual Sunday morning services in the chapels were suspended, and when it was reported they were to be resumed certain papers carried lurid stories of soldiers being in bivouac

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in the neighbourhood, equipped with machine guns, and so on. There was not a word of truth in them, for those were peaceful Sundays. Even at the time the papers containing such tales circulated in Princetown, the police had been taken off the roads, and the barricades they had manned and the sentry-boxes they had occupied at night had been removed. One or two minor incidents were also magnified into murderous attacks on officers, and it was such distortion and sensationalism that provoked criticisms by the Home Secretary and questions in the House.

The national papers, too, seemed to be obsessed with the idea that the use of troops was inevitable. When the line, "troops standing by" ready to be rushed to Dartmoor in the event of further trouble, was at last dumped into the melting-pot, the assertion that soldiers were to be used to guard the court and prisoners during the trial was persisted in, and it was in vain that news editors were assured that not only was the suggestion ridiculed by the police and denied by the military authorities, but that the very idea of their being used for police duty was distasteful to the soldiers.

It was during the demonstrations by the segregated men that one of them earned fame for his accomplishments as a vocalist. He was said to have charmed his fellow-prisoners and the people of Princetown with "When Irish Eyes are Smiling," "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes," and other popular songs, sung with the artistry and skill of the most accomplished of concert artistes. He was identified during the trial, for when a question was asked by a pressman about a certain man in the dock, a police officer, with a merry twinkle in his eye, replied, "That is your Caruso!"

## CHAPTER XXI

### HUMOURS OF THE TRIAL

THE gravity of the trial did not impress itself on the mutineers to any apparent degree, and they were always readier to laugh than to subside into solemnity. Each day provided its humours, of which I give a few examples.

A prisoner, cross-examining an officer, made a bad shot. He had not informed himself of family conditions.

"Do you remember saying to me, 'Think of my wife and children'?" he asked.

"No, I have no children," was the crushing reply.

A battered silver cornet was produced by one of the prisoners as evidence of how he had been victimized.

"I had hoped to earn my living with this when I get out, and hid it under the table for protection," he explained; and then, regarding the instrument ruefully, he added, "Now look at it! I blew the 'Fall In,' and then thinking it would be understood better, I blew 'Defaulters.' The men were given twenty minutes to fall in, and after five minutes had passed from the sounding of the call, the police charged, and the men had no chance of obeying orders!"

"With the clock in front of you, you did not notice the time," suggested counsel to one of the

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prisoners, who pithily replied, "No, the occasion was more germane than the time."

A prisoner asked the senior medical officer whether he would accept his word about a certain incident, and Dr. Battiscombe, with courtly deference, answered, "I never hesitate to accept either your word or the word of any of you."

The somewhat dreary monotone adopted by one prisoner when relating his adventures contrasted strangely with the laughter aroused by his naïve admissions. Describing a visit he paid to the separate cells, he said he was smoking a cigarette, and a released separate cellist asked him for a couple of draws. "I gave him my cigarette," the raconteur explained, "and he took it inside and shut the cell door! I said 'good morning,' and went away."

"I was passing the boiler-house and saw only two panes of glass left in," continued the story-teller. "They seemed to be out of place, so I pushed my fists through them like this," and he demonstrated with his hands.

Visiting the officers' mess, the investigator of unconsidered trifles admitted he found a lot of stuff lying about, "I had two raw eggs, a rice pudding, a pint of milk, and bread and cheese," he added.

Another *mot* was, "A shot was fired, and thinking this is no place for me, I hopped it!"

After the round-up by the police, the prisoners were made to stand facing a wall with their hands raised above their heads. One man had something in his hand, and a policeman asked what it was. "Bread and butter," was the reply, whereupon, related the man, "the policeman hit me on the head with his baton and said, 'Well, make a sandwich out of that!'"

Asked if he knew who the constable was, the victim answered, "I don't know; he was a big

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man, about seven feet. I think they picked out the biggest in the force." And the end of his perhaps imperfect day was that he was hit on the arms and had a gash in his head in which the doctor put three stitches. "And that was the finish of it," he added philosophically.

Admitting it was true he knocked over a pedestal, and replying to the question why he did it, one of the rioters explained that "it was just to pass the time away."

The smokers' hut had attractions for the mutineers as well as the law-abiding men, and one of them described how he was given a packet of cigarettes by an unnamed philanthropist, while an officer obliged him with a light. "The officer refused my offer of a cigarette, but accepted the coupon from the packet," he added.

Dr. Battiscombe also visited the smokers' hut, where two wounded men were lying. One of the prisoners offered him a cigarette. Asked by counsel whether he accepted it, Dr. Battiscombe replied that he did. "Did you feel insulted by the offer of a cigarette?" queried counsel. "No, I did not," the doctor assured him.

A mutineer related how he was sitting on the ground smoking a cigarette, when a policeman asked him what he was doing there. "I told him I was having a smoke and enjoying it, and he struck me on the body saying, 'Smoke that and enjoy it,'" observed the man, with comic gravity.

Yet another *mot* : "I am not a psychologist ; I cannot say what he meant." This in reply to counsel's request for a suggestion as to what an officer meant when he used a certain remark.

One of the accused told a story of how on a certain day in February four charges were made against him. "Naturally, I lost my temper," he told the jury in

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confidential tones, "and I broke some things in my cell. I then saw Principal Officer Rattenbury line up four officers outside my cell and order them to enter. They drew their truncheons and came in and assaulted me. They gave me six hits on the head with their truncheons, and eight blows on my arms, and sixteen about my body! These marks on my head (indicating them to the jury) are the results of the assault."

The belaboured prisoner was one of the men acquitted.

The Solicitor-General tried to elicit from one man an explanation of why he was near the boundary wall, but all he could get was the bland assurance that "a man was smoking a cigarette, and I thought I would keep on his tail and get the fag end of it."

"You didn't try to get out," asked the Solicitor-General?

"I would not go out even if they opened the gate for me," was the reply, made with an air of surprised innocence.

"On receiving my breakfast I complained about the bread being broken," said a prisoner in an injured tone, and, he added, the comment of the officer on duty was, "Tut, tut, what do you think this is : the Savoy Hotel ?"

Asked by counsel if the character of one of the accused was good, the Chaplain replied, "He has only committed one offence, and that was not criminal.

"What was it?" was the incautious query of counsel.

"He played an execrable euphonium solo at a concert," explained the chaplain, with a smile that proved infectious.

In contrast, a bitter note was struck by one of the accused. "I don't claim to be a nice boy, a good prisoner," he said, "but I do claim to be a man, and

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I should fear that some day it might be thrown in my face that I was a loyal prisoner—loyal to thin porridge and a hard bed. Was ever such a phrase coined ? ”

The writer of an anonymous letter was perhaps indulging in a little leg-pulling when he besought counsel—

“ Not to spare the deep emotion,  
Nor check the falling tear.”

## CHAPTER XXII

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE CONVICT

**A**LTHOUGH with the passing of years many changes in the system of control, administration, and the supervision and treatment of prisoners were introduced, new buildings erected, and old structures modernized, Dartmoor has never shed its main features, nor its peculiar atmosphere. It stands to-day as it has done through generations of prisoners the most distinctive, if also the most notorious, of our penal establishments. Step inside for a short visit, without of course the compulsion exercised by one of His Majesty's judges, but with the permission of the Home Secretary—if you can get it.

Pass under the granite archway with its motto, and we are in an oblong yard with the governor's residence on the right, and the deputy-governor's and the deputy medical officer's house on the left. Between this and the prison proper are ponderous doors and wrought-iron gates. The great doors are thrown open for the passage of horses and vehicles. A little trap door and grille provide a peep-hole through which an officer or caller seeking admission is scanned by the gateman. If the latter is satisfied that the visitor has no evil designs, and has the writ of official sanction in some form or another, he opens the small door let into the great main doors.

We pass the test and find ourselves in a yard, on

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the left of which is the gateman's lodge, where keys are handed in or taken out and where the telephone system has its centre. Here, too, is the old guardroom now converted into offices needed since the destruction of the old administrative block. Facing us are the great main gates, pierced by a small gate for single admissions, and through this we pass into the neatly-kept drive down to the line of buildings of which the administrative block, with its bell tower, was the centre, but now only a pile of blackened ruins. From the high wall that runs across the segment between the main gates and the public road, the prison stands within a circular wall varying in height from eighteen to twenty feet.

To the left of the main drive is a more or less square block of buildings, which for the most part are workshops for tailors, shoemakers, smiths, carpenters, and other skilled men, and stores. On the right is the officers' mess which figured so conspicuously in the operations of the rioters, the hospital, on the site of the building allotted to the petty officers among the French and American captives, and both the Roman Catholic and Nonconformist chapels.

The circle is bisected by a line of buildings stretching the whole distance across. On the extreme left is D hall, a comparatively new prison, to which is joined one of the old prisons—a long, low building. A hall extends across the right half of the circle until it reaches almost to the boundary wall, and the ruined administrative block fills the central position between the two great halls.

The lower half of the prison circle is virtually divided into three sections. On the left, extending obliquely from the middle towards the boundary wall, is C hall, with a very spacious parade ground between it and D hall. On the right, B hall, a building of similar type and size, also extends obliquely from

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the centre towards the boundary wall, and between it and A hall stands the old prison in which two cells of the original type are maintained intact as curiosities. Here a large open space provides another parade ground.

The middle section is divided by a block of buildings which once housed the Romans, Big Dick and his subjects. It now comprises the cookhouse, bakehouse, and Anglican chapel, beyond which, standing broadway on, are the stone-sheds. To the left of the main block is the twine-shed, on the roof of which two convicts were shot and wounded when they were defiantly smashing skylights. Away on the right are the separate cells, of which I write later.

As the great halls are the centres of interest let us examine them. They are massively built of granite with slated roofs. The walls are pierced with hundreds of windows curiously squat, yet larger than they appear from a distance. Accommodation is provided for a total of 1200 prisoners, and at times the whole has been occupied, though I am told that only once within memory of the older generation of officers has the round figure of 1200 been reached, and then maintained for only one day, a single discharge the following morning reducing the total again. To-day there are only about 300 prisoners, and it would be possible to accommodate the lot in one hall. For adequate reasons that is not done, the men being divided between A and B halls.

Let us enter one of the four. The first thing revealed is that the hall, whether A, B, C, or D, has no semblance of the central assembly room usually termed a hall. Instead there are spacious corridors with a seemingly endless succession of doors on either side, and when we mount the steps from floor to floor we find on the three and (in one or two cases)

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four upper storeys reproductions of the ground-floor plan.

The inner side of each of the wooden doors is covered with a sheet of metal, fastened with bolts, and there is little possibility of even the strongest man smashing the door, which is fitted with a double lock of the automatic type.

An indicator provides assurance for the officer on duty that the door is properly secured. There is also an aperture with a grid through which the officer can satisfy himself that the prisoner is within.

The cell is about ten feet by seven feet. Its equipment consists of a bed-board, which when not in use stands on end, a table, stool, basin, small mirror, and other necessaries. The bedding includes blankets of the Service pattern and pillow, and for the long-stage man with satisfactory conduct records there is a spring mattress.

The cell is very different from the two still preserved in the old prison as relics of the accommodation in early days. The latter are constructed of corrugated iron and barely furnished. One is seen as it would be left by the convict in the morning, tidied, and the bedding folded and stacked. The other is ready for the night, with bed made and candles placed for use, for such were the only means of lighting in the days when these cells were first occupied.

But to return to the cell we are examining. The window has a cast-iron frame, glazed with thick glass. The centre pane is in the form of a sliding panel which the prisoner can open or close at will. From numerous windows there is a view of a wide expanse of Dartmoor, with its skyline broken by irregular masses of great tors. In the lonely hours of the long summer evenings, when the sun still casts his golden rays over the gloriously tinted moors, and

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the blue distance contrasts with the high lights in the foreground, the convict may have a dim conception that

"On the mountains is freedom,"

but, alas, not for him. He knows that when Dartmoor is in her most genial mood his chances of winning that freedom are at their lowest, and that if he wants her aid he must choose a time when the whole scene from his cell window has been transformed, when the days are short, and the long hours of darkness offer cover to his movements, when a pall of fog hangs over the moor, and bleak and sodden boglands and swollen rivers make search difficult, and at times impossible.

From the windows of the cells facing the village the view is of a different nature. Within a short distance of the great wall are the officers' quarters, all of which, including those in the long, straggling street, are prison property. The rugged, rising moor and plantations on the shoulder of North Hessary Tor form a background, while the farmstead, the stables, and the gasworks lie on the Tavistock side of the prison.

The convict spends the greater part of his prison life in his cell. If he had his choice he would rather work longer hours and so reduce the seemingly interminable monotony of his confinement. Down to a year ago one of the foremost principles of our modern prison system was that there should be an eight-hour associated day, or working day, during which prisoners were in the main engaged in labour in association with one another. Then came the crisis in national finance, and the order went forth that economies were necessary even in prisons. Consequently, staffs were cut down, the result being that prisoners could not be kept in association as long as hitherto. In other

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words, in order that the State might save a little money the men are now condemned to longer periods of confinement and idleness than would be otherwise necessary.

Last year there was also a shortage of orders for certain goods made in prisons. Consequently, output had to be restricted, and this was another factor in reducing the number of hours for associated labour.

Study the convict's daily routine :

- 6.30 a.m. Signal to rise ;
- 7.15 „ Breakfast ;
- 8.15 „ Parade for labour ;
- 11.45 „ Return for dinner ;
- 1.45 p.m. Again parade for labour ;
- 4.30 „ Cease work.

Supper follows, and for many men confinement in the cells until next morning. For the privilege-men there are exercise, classes, or a pipe in the smokers' shed from 6 to 7 p.m. Here, too, conversation is permitted, and games such as draughts, dominoes, and rings may be played. Second and third stagers are also permitted to talk at exercise once a day. There may be an occasional concert in the chapel, the closing hour usually being not later than 8 p.m.

It will be seen, therefore, that the good conduct men have a considerable amount of diversion and intercourse, but the man who has not yet won similar privileges, or has forfeited them, may be in his cell from 4.30 p.m. until 8.15 a.m., an experience far worse than an hour or two of additional labour. It is during the long break at midday and in the early evening that the chaplain visits the prisoners in their cells.

But listen, the siren is signalling the dawn of another day. The prisoners rise and prepare for their first meal. Presently prison officers, accompanied by convict orderlies, bring around the breakfast that

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never varies. There is no general assembly. Each convict takes his meals in his own cell. Officers and convict orderlies on each landing proceed from cell to cell. The former open the doors, and each prisoner emerges and holds out his enamelled plate for the porridge served by one officer, and his earthenware mug for the tea poured into it by another, the allotted quantity of bread being also served.

Each man receives twelve ounces of bread, one ounce of margarine, one pint of porridge, and one pint of tea. The prison regulations provide that no more than three cell doors must be opened at one time, and after a man has been served he must immediately close his door, which fastens automatically.

Before leaving for labour the men have to fold their bedding, sweep out their cells, and leave everything clean and neat. Then they parade for work. A feature of the day's routine is the numbering of the people, which is carried out more religiously than Moses ever contemplated.

Each landing officer keeps a register of names and numbers of prisoners, and each cell also has a number. The officer in charge of a landing reports to the principal officer that all is well or otherwise ; and the officer in charge of parties on parade reports to the principal officer, who in turn reports to the deputy-governor or chief officer. On return from work the officers report numbers which must correspond with those going out. In this manner the convicts are counted seven or eight times during the day.

The parade to-day differs from those of former years. The old custom was for the entire population of the prison to assemble on a single parade ground, but that system was altered during the governorship of Mr. Basil Thomson, because often trouble developed on the parade ground, and he argued that the difficulty of controlling, with the available staff, a thousand

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or more men when they were assembled *en masse* was much greater than it would be if they were split up into three or four parties. He therefore introduced the system of a parade on each ground.

A colony of jackdaws and pigeons in the vicinity of the prison has a peculiar interest for the convicts, who when on parade feed the birds with scraps of food they surreptitiously drop before they move off. It is said that they are actuated not merely by their love of bird and animal life, but also by the superstition with which the average criminal is imbued. They believe, so the story runs, that the jackdaws are the reincarnation of old lags who have died, and whose souls, passing to the jackdaws, have returned to the prison.

The idea seems to be too fantastic even for the most credulous, but can what I am about to relate be proof that the old lag really believes it? At one time the jackdaws multiplied so greatly that the authorities decided that it was necessary to reduce their numbers. And just as rook-shooting parties are organized, so it was arranged that similar parties should thin out the superfluous jackdaws with sporting rifles.

The authorities, however, counted without the convicts, who by some means got to know of the plans for the massacre of their bird friends, and so strong was their objection that the plan had to be abandoned. I leave to the reader the problem of whether the opposition of the prisoners was inspired by superstition or sentiment.

But now the parade grounds are empty. The men have moved away to their work. Some of them pass to the tailors' shop, where clothing for the prisoners is made. Time was when uniforms for the officers and such institutions as Greenwich Hospital School were made in the shop, but the reduction in the numbers of prisoners and staff brought it to an

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end. Another party enters the shoemakers' shop, where the prison boots are made, and are all the better for the handwork put into them. In the carpenters' shop men are turning out workmanlike articles with plane, saw, chisel, and hammer ; and in the wheelwrights' shop others are effecting repairs to farm carts and wagons, and even building new vehicles.

From the smithy comes the ring of hammer on anvil fashioning essentials in iron for the prison or farm, or tools are being sharpened for use in the stone-sheds, while, it may be, horses are being shod.

Elsewhere men are busy making twine and mailbags for the Post Office. Basketmaking, printing, and bookbinding are among other crafts practised at one period or another. At the stone-sheds, which are heated in severe weather by open coke braziers, stone-cutters are fashioning granite hewn from the quarry yonder.

In the domestic sphere assistant cooks and male substitutes for kitchen-maids prove their capabilities in the kitchen, bakers produce the daily supply of wholemeal bread in the bakery for both prisoners and resident officers ; and laundrymen achieve highly creditable results in the laundry. Elsewhere, masons carry out the repairs necessary in the prison buildings.

Some men are engaged as hospital orderlies, officers' mess orderlies, principal officers' orderlies, librarians' orderlies. Indeed, there is no work necessary to this practically self-contained community in which the convict is not engaged. Some of the jobs are much sought after, and men serving in the hospital are invariably kindly, sympathetic, and skilful in nursing the sick.

All phases of labour are, of course, under the direction and supervision of officers, many of whom are selected because they are craftsmen. They have themselves to do the highly skilled work. For



A PARTY OF CONVICTS IN CHARGE OF HORSES AND CARTS DRAWING MANGOLD WURTZEL FROM THE FIELDS OF DARTMOOR PRISON



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example, the actual shoeing of horses is done by an officer who is a farrier, his assistants being convicts. All prisoners not employed out of doors are exercised on the parade grounds for half an hour morning and afternoon.

Years ago, parties of visitors were conducted by officers (selected by the governor) through the shops to see the nature and quality of the work done, but the practice was stopped when a visitor, who showed unwisdom in seeking such a privilege, was recognized and attacked by a prisoner, who regarded himself as his victim, tragedy being narrowly averted.

The quarry formerly provided occupation for a large number of the more hardened prisoners, who in the early days reached it by crossing the main road from the prison property. Later, a double screen of wire was erected from a point well within prison lands, and between this the convicts marched to the entrance of a tunnel constructed under the road, and so entered the quarry screened from public view.

Dominating the quarry and the countryside is a semaphore station with a beat around it for the armed guard, who does sentry-go while the convicts work under the supervision of officers. His duty may not be without compensation on a genial summer day, but when wintry winds blow it is anything but enviable !

Nowadays little work is done in the quarry. Only when stone is needed are men employed there, and the outdoor parties are principally men engaged on the farm, in the gardens and fields, and in carting. Here is a party of horsemen carting material to or from the gasworks. In the shippens milkers have already milked the cows, the cattle and pigs have been fed, the sheep cared for, and other tasks performed in and about the farm buildings.

Away in the gardens men are digging, trenching, planting, or weeding ; in the fields others are plough-

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ing, or hoeing, or it may be pulling roots. Drainage work is proceeding yonder, or peat is being cut in brick-shaped clods and laid out to dry before being carted to the prison.

But stay, the hoot of the siren is borne on the wind. It is time to return for the midday meal. The men are assembled and marched back to the prison, where they are counted, and it is reported all have returned. Two hours will pass before the signal for labour is again sounded. The men have time not only for their dinners but to do further tidying or cleaning in the cells. Some of them may have returned to find the cell equipment piled on the bed-board. If so, they know that in their absence cells have been searched, and that if anything has been found that should not be there trouble is in store for them. It may be this man or that has managed to obtain and conceal something illicit—possibly a bit of tobacco, a cigarette or two, or something intended for a forbidden purpose.

It is even possible that something has been planted in an innocent man's cell by an enemy who seeks to do him a bad turn. It may not be easy to do so, but it is far from impossible. In either case, the unlucky occupant of the cell has to face the consequences—report and punishment. Even if the man be victimized, he does not find it easy to prove it.

But the immediate business is dinner. Here it comes : twelve ounces of potatoes, six ounces of meat, four ounces of vegetables. To-morrow a pint of soup may be substituted for the six ounces of meat. On another day four ounces of bacon takes the place of fresh meat, and on a fourth twelve ounces of suet pudding come into the meal. Formerly a routine meal for each day of the week was rigidly adhered to, and the convict knew exactly what was to be his dinner. That has been changed, and now he is left

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guessing as to the particular kind of meal to be served, or in official parlance "issued." Quantities are unaltered, but the cooking is varied. He may have stews, pies, haricot mutton, and so on.

The old lag is keen on getting all that he is entitled to, and his judgment is so sharpened that he can tell at sight whether he is given his proper weight. The authorities, too, concerned that he shall not suffer in this respect, have framed regulations enabling him, if he so desires, to have his food weighed. He may also make complaints of the quality of food, but here a strictly defined routine has to be observed. The stories which have appeared in print of thirty or forty prisoners raiding the kitchen with rejected dinners and demanding something better are sheer imagination. Whether one man or fifty men complain of a meal the procedure is the same.

The complaint is made to the landing officer, who informs the principal officer, and he reports to the chief officer. If there be a number of complaints, two or three sample dinners are selected, taken to the kitchen by officers, and examined. There is no "take it or leave it" ultimatum, even by the governor, until the medical officer has pronounced on it. It is seldom there is legitimate cause for complaint, but when there is, the prisoner is served with another meal.

Sometimes an unpalatable dinner is due to convict assistants in the kitchen who want to create trouble. "I can assure you that a lump of soap dropped into the soup makes a particularly nauseous mess of it," an authority tells me. "That has happened on occasion, and it cannot be detected until it is tested on the palate."

I leave the suggestion there. The two hours' midday interlude has passed. The clock records 1.45 p.m. and the signal is heard for return to labour.

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The same routine as that of the morning in numbering, etc., is followed, and work is resumed where it was dropped. Again the men disappear into workshops. Again parties march into the public road on their way to stables and farm, or proceed by the prison roads to other parts of the estate.

The gangs are small compared with those of a few years ago, when the order of going, except for the dress, resembled double files of soldiers marching easy. Then the work of reclamation was in full swing ; nowadays it proceeds on a smaller scale ; and though the labour is hard it is not disliked, because it provides the great privilege of outdoor occupation. Formerly, for the men engaged in it there was a little addition to the ordinary diet, such, for example, as an ounce of brown sugar and an ounce of jam. Those were the days of three diets—heavy labour, medium, and light labour. Such distinctions have gone, and there is one general diet for all, except, of course, men undergoing punishment, for whom there are punishment diets.

Peat-cutting is also arduous, but it is better than being confined within the walls of the prison on a wet day, digging weeds (to find which a microscope is necessary), breaking stones to powder with a small hammer, or picking oakum. Then the difficulty is to find suitable employment, and one governor after governor has cudgelled his brains to find forms of labour that would be both interesting to the prisoners and profitable to the authorities. The principal problem is to find work suited to unskilled men for which expensive and elaborate equipment is not required.

One of the most laborious jobs is to remove the granite boulders found in the process of peat-cutting or other work on the land. These are used in the construction of boundary walls of the type so general

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on Dartmoor. At one time attempts to escape were more frequent among men engaged in reclaiming land than anywhere else. This was due to the numbers employed in the work, the several gangs comprising in all from 100 to 200 men, and to the temptation offered of a dash for the open moor when fog fell suddenly.

The only means of communication with the prison was by semaphore, and the delay in bringing out reinforcements of the civil guard, even though mounted, and in collecting and escorting workers back to the prison, almost invariably ensured a good start to escaping prisoners. To counteract this as far as possible a telephone system was installed during the governorship of Mr. Thomson, and the linking up of the outlying parts of the estate with the prison has proved of great value.

Work outside the prison used to be more varied than it is to-day. Public works on the roads now carried out by the County and Rural District Councils was done by convicts. The elementary school for village children belonged to the Prison Commissioners, and in the morning convicts lit the fires and did the necessary work now done by caretakers, and in the afternoon swept, scrubbed, and dusted the class-rooms.

To-day it would be a queer experience for the boys and girls assembling for school to see convicts playing the part of cleaners, but it was so common to the children of those days that it excited in them little interest. They were accustomed even to seeing prisoners in their homes, for when there were repairs, painting, or decoration necessary in the officers' quarters it was done by convicts, under the supervision of officers.

Indeed the system continues to-day. If the winds of Dartmoor have ripped off a few slates, a

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prisoner repairs the damage. If a carpenter is needed, he comes to the house from the prison, and if the housewife can induce the authorities in these days of economy to agree that a coat of paint is essential to woodwork, inside or out, the convict-painter arrives to wield the brush.

But the afternoon is wearing on. Work in the fields and shops has ceased, the cows have been milked, the horses bedded down in the stables, and all the stock has been fed for the last time to-day. Every man is within the prison walls ready for supper. This consists of twelve ounces of bread, one ounce of margarine (enough to cover two slices of bread), one ounce of cheese, and one pint of cocoa. It is singular that while ways and means of varying the midday meal have been found, breakfast and supper remain the same day after day. It is against the monotony of these meals that the prisoners revolt, and one conjectures whether it is beyond the resources of the prison authorities to provide a little palatable change of diet morning and evening.

The routine of each day is unchanged except on Sundays, when the only work is that which is absolutely essential—the provision of meals for the prisoners, milking, feeding, and caring for the farm stock. The convicts attend service in one of the chapels—Anglican, Nonconformist, or Roman Catholic—exercise in the parade grounds, and spend the rest of the day in their cells reading, or perhaps doing a little writing. The men who have earned the privilege smoke in what was formerly the vegetable shed, now converted into a smokers' room, and have opportunity also for conversation similar to that of the weekday evening. It is at the close of the Sunday morning service that the previous day's football results are read.

The library provides an excellent choice of books,

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and changes may be made twice a week. The privilege man is also allowed to read a newspaper, probably a weekly, which has been heavily censored. Every precaution is taken to prevent the paper from feeding his appetite for crime.

Some men make mailbags in their cells, the object of the authorities being to encourage the men to work, and thus occupy their minds. Certain of the prisoners, however, do not appreciate this ; indeed are hostile to it.

Privileges are earned under a system of marks. Formerly one of the duties of the prison officers was to award and keep a record of marks, but the system, satisfactory neither to the prisoner nor the officer, has now been changed and simplified. It operates in this way : a man serving, for example, a sentence of three years, receives automatically six marks per day, and if he earns no more he serves his full sentence. If his conduct is good, he is awarded an additional two marks per day, and if he gains them continuously he earns a remission of three months on each year of his sentence. He, therefore, serves two years and three months instead of three years.

The register is kept in the office, and the marks are recorded in it daily by the office staff instead of by the individual officer. If there is no report of misconduct it is assumed that the man has earned the full eight marks and they are credited to him. If, on the other hand, he has misbehaved, it is reported, and of course he does not receive the coveted marks.

Here we have also the stage system. If a first stage man earns the maximum marks for eighteen months he passes to the second stage, which entitles him to associate with other prisoners for one hour every night. At the end of two and a half years, if he has still earned maximum marks, he enters stage three, which entitles him to further concessions, and

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at the end of the fourth year he reaches stage four—the highest. He is then permitted tobacco or cigarettes, and may make purchases of tobacco, sweets, or biscuits, paying for them out of the 2s. 6d. per month gratuity he has earned by his good conduct. He is allowed to read a newspaper, as I have already stated, and has earned the remission of a quarter of his sentence in each year.

Variations in prison clothing mark the stage progress of the wearer. During the first stage the garb is of French grey. In the second stage a badge is added. Into the third stage enters blue with the red collar, while a red band on the arm denotes that the wearer has earned special privileges, including more freedom than is permitted to any other class. Within the prison he works unattended by a guard. Invariably he is a man whose sentence has less than twelve months to run. The clothes of all, by the way, fit quite well, boots are solidly made and of proper size, and slippers for cell wear are comfortable.

A prisoner is allowed to receive a visit and one letter and to write one letter during the first week of his sentence. Then by successive steps he is allowed the same privileges every four months; then every three months until he reaches the third stage of his sentence, during which he may receive a visit and one letter and write one letter every two months. When he passes into the special stage he is entitled to these privileges every month. If he does not receive a visit, he can write and receive an additional letter in lieu of it. If a man has been guilty of a breach of discipline he forfeits these privileges for a specified time. Letters are censored, and it may be pages are struck out by the censor, in which event the excisions are entered in the Erasure Book.

Some men include things in their letters which they know will not be allowed to pass. The purport

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may be merely humorous, or written simply to relieve the feelings of the scribe regarding an officer against whom he has conceived a dislike, in which case apparently the more vitriolic or personally offensive the composition the greater the satisfaction the author derives from it. Quite different is the effusion of the humorist.

"I stay here wishing the time to pass as though I had got as long to live as some of those old sinners in the Bible who didn't die until they were about 900," wrote one. "Coffin-making and undertaking must have been a slow game in those days."

According to rule, the governor or deputy-governor must see every man in the prison at least once a day, and any man, who thinks he has cause, may request an interview with the governor. Minor offences, breaches of discipline, being in possession of prohibited articles, and so on, are dealt with by the governor, and more serious offences come within the jurisdiction of the Visiting Justices, who may inflict much heavier forms of punishment than is permitted to the governor.

Convicts have a right to appeal to the Visiting Justices against punishment by the governor, or they may appeal to the Home Secretary. Appeals have to be written on the Home Office petition form. It was stated at the mutiny trial that prisoners are not slow in exercising this right. Whether they all expect their petitions to succeed is open to doubt, because sometimes they use them as the medium for blowing off a little steam, for recording that their trials were prejudiced, or suggesting that there are reasons why their sentences should be reduced or remitted.

Probably the prisoner who wrote to the Home Secretary that his "liberation would be a great service to the country" was more of a humorist than an egotist or optimist.

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I have already referred to the searching of the cells during the absence of the usual occupants. The men are also subject to more or less formal search when going out or coming in from work. A more minute investigation comes when the man has to join the squad for the bath-house. Then the necessary weekly bath provides the opportunity for officers to make a very thorough search of both body and clothing, and there is little chance of a prisoner retaining anything he may have been concealing on his person.

For misconduct or breach of discipline a prisoner is brought before the governor, who gives him a fair hearing and opportunity of stating his own case. The interview takes place in the adjudication room, where the governor, and any other official accompanying him, sit at a table, between which and the prisoner there is a high rail. This protection was provided years ago after a violent convict had attacked the governor. Special interviews are granted to prisoners when there is family news to be imparted to them or family business to be transacted.

The separate cells are not merely for the men who, because of misconduct, are undergoing punishment. For various reasons, many other prisoners find their way there, and occupy the ordinary cells. The men who are undergoing a period of solitary confinement are accommodated in a different type of cell, stronger in construction and of greater isolation. In these cases there is a punishment diet. No. 1 consists of only bread and water, but the regulations provide that it must not be inflicted for more than three consecutive days. It is followed by No. 2, which consists of potatoes or porridge only for dinner instead of full rations. The two diets alternate when the sentence of solitary confinement extends over a period.

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Solitary confinement is the worst form of punishment that can be inflicted upon a prisoner. If he had to choose between this and the cat he would probably prefer the cat. Years ago a prisoner had to undergo the first nine months of his sentence in solitary confinement in a local gaol, but this period was cut down to three months as the result of Galsworthy's play, *Justice*, and subsequently to one month. Under the regulations the governor has no power to flog a prisoner, but the Visiting Justices may inflict such punishment.

Every form of punishment entails the loss of remission marks, reduction to a lower class, and consequently loss of privileges and gratuity.

The razor-slashing incidents that preceded the mutiny provoked some comment on the ease with which the prisoners appeared to possess themselves of razor blades. I understand that the custom was for prisoners, who had the necessary money, to buy blades, or these might be provided by friends through the proper channels. Where men did not possess blades from either of these sources, they could obtain one for a shave from a stock kept in the prison, the blade after use being returned to the officer issuing it. The majority of the prisoners take a pride in shaving, and the men who grow beards are few in number. Therefore, little mystery lies in the possession of razor blades by convicts.

The duties that fell on the old civil guard of a semi-police nature are now performed by the ordinary prison staff. The civil guard's work was to see prisoners did not escape, and to that end they were armed with carbines. They had no part in the ordinary duties of the prison officer. They were practically armed police though not of the police force proper. Now the entire prison staff share in prison duties, though a certain number, when gangs

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are working outside, have to perform guard duty and then carry rifles.

The generation of senior prison officers, still serving or recently retired, are the superiors of their predecessors, and have proved themselves reliable, humane, and kindly, and yet at the same time good disciplinarians. Whether the young men by whom they are being succeeded are better equipped because they have been through a training school some authorities express doubt. It is suggested that much of the recent trouble may be traced to inexperience. Whether that be so I can offer no opinion, though I do know that the better the type of officer, measured by standards both humanitarian and disciplinarian, the greater his success in winning both the confidence and respect of the prisoner.

The old school produced some notable men as well as many who had little claim to distinction, and amusing stories are told of them. There was one burly senior who, in common with his fellows, sought to profit by the efforts at mutual improvement run by the then governor, who sometimes lectured and asked questions.

"What do you know of Jean d'Arc, Mr. Blank?" asked the governor on one occasion.

"Nothing, sir," was the reply, "but if you will give me his number I'll turn him up."

In closing this sketch of a day in the life of a convict I will add the racy caricature of the same subject contained in "The Lay of the Lagged Minstrel," written in 1907 on his slate by a convict who more than once "did time" at Dartmoor. Some of his quips now date because of changes, but the irresponsibility and irrepressibility they exude still find expression in certain types at the "Moor":

"I am a lag, an artful lag, and do not care a rap  
For all the D's in Scotland Yard, who are as soft as pap.

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I can fake the broads, and crack a crib, and never met my match,  
In taking down a bank cashier by what is termed the scratch.  
I'm doing ten long weary years at Dartmoor wild and bleak,  
Of what I've suffered, seen, and heard, I really cannot speak.  
We have to keep strick silence here, but if you please will wait,  
In racing phrase I'll give you all 'the straight tip' on my slate.  
The prison bread, like Mrs. Brown, is brown, but not so nice,  
The skilly and the soup are made of beetles, meal, and mice,  
They cut our hair down to the skin, moustache and whiskers  
    too,

Instead of men they make us look like monkeys at the Zoo.  
They clothe us in brown fustian, broad-arrowed, large and  
    black,

It is most harrowing to the nerves to have them on the back.  
Nine months slip by, one summer day, myself and others seven,  
Handcuffed and chained, we travel down for change of air to  
    Devon.

And lest some female gay and fair, should tempt us on the rail  
To stray from virtue's narrow path, we go down by the *mail*.  
We get to Princetown safe and sound and there as well is known,  
They strip us naked just to see we're really flesh and bone.  
They find no stiffs, not even snouts, no readers, chivs, or spikes  
And then we see Chief Warden H---, whom everybody likes.  
Next day at ten, we take a bath in water just like ochre,  
And then we march up to the Farm, and interview the Croaker.  
Again we strip ; he sounds our chest, and *chest* to make a joke,  
He sounds my heart, and then exclaims, ' You are a hearty  
    bloke ! '

Each morning, when we've breakfasted, we march away to  
    chapel,

The Chaplain says we all are lagged because Eve stole an apple.  
We sing a hymn all out of tune, and then we kneel and  
    pray,

And twice on Sundays, wet or fine, the old boy cracks a lay.  
We join our parties on parade, each day when we have churched,  
And, lest a lag should crutch a toke, we're diligently searched.  
When all's correct we march away in hail, rain, snow, or fog,  
To practice agricultural work in trenching on the bog.

The seven tasks of Hercules compared with ours were easy,  
You cannot dig, you cannot stand, the peat's so wet and greasy.  
The God of Strength, without a doubt, had beef and beer *ad lib*,  
Poor lags get neither but they go to chokey if they jib.

Sometimes when things are very dull, a convict makes a dash  
To gain his freedom, but the guards of him soon make a hash.  
Lag-shooting is such good old sport it's never out of season,  
But to shoot a pheasant in July is almost worse than treason.

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If Francatelli could but see our daily bill of fare,  
He'd say, 'Oui, oui, Monsieur, je vois, your convicts live on  
air.'

The bread's like asphalte, tough and black ; the soup and tea's  
so weak

They cannot stand or walk about, in fact they cannot speak.  
Our Sunday dinner is a pint of pork soup mixed with peas,  
It's fairly good ; in days gone by we had but bread and  
cheese.

On week days every convict gets of boiled spuds just a pound,  
And five small ounces of tough beef, off anywhere but the  
round.

On Tuesdays and on Fridays, too, we have a pint of shins  
We swear the cook's left out the meat ; he only bows and grins.  
Five ounces of fat mutton is our Wednesday bill of fare,  
Of Thursday's duff, my dearest friends, I'll have you all beware.  
The fame of English convict duff is known both far and wide,  
From San Francisco to Hong Kong, from Melbourne to the  
Clyde.

It's utilised for building forts and ironclads as well,  
It's guaranteed to be bomb proof 'gainst bullet, shot, and shell.  
When feeling sick, each day at twelve, the doctor you can see,  
He'll say you get too much to eat and order S and G.  
I'll speak the truth and frankly own that when a man is ill,  
He'll take you to the Farm, and there he'll cure or kill.  
Our conduct as a general rule is exemplary, I think,  
We do not smoke, we're never seen to be the worse for drink ;  
No sporting papers do we read ; such thoughts they make me  
shiver.

We patronize the *Leisure Hour*, *The Lamp*, *Good Words*, *The  
Quiver*.

I've often heard that honesty of policy's the best,  
And as I'll soon be going home, I'll put it to the test.  
God save the Queen, and may He send down blessings on her  
head,  
She may make me Poet Laureate when Alfred Austin's dead."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TYPES AT " THE MOOR "

**S**OME years ago, Dr. Charles Goring, a prison medical officer and psychologist, pursued a scientific study of the problem of "criminal types." He made head measurements and a skilled examination of skulls on the biometric method, and came to the conclusion "that no evidence has emerged confirming the existence of a physical criminal type such as Lombroso and his disciples have described. The data shows that physical differences exist between different kinds of criminals precisely as they exist between different kinds of law-abiding people. There is no such thing as a physical criminal type."

Support for this conclusion, from the point of view of the observer rather than the scientist, lies in such experience as I have gained at Princeton from a study of thirty convicts who occupied the dock at the mutiny trial, of released prisoners, and other criminals I have had an opportunity of watching. Only in a small percentage of the number would it be possible to say, "This or that man is the type one would suspect of being a hardened criminal." Nearly all of them were men of types met in every walk of life, and who, in normal circumstances, would attract nothing more than a casual glance. They would pass for clean-living artisans or professional men.

Even the prisoners whom I have watched at work,

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or passing to and from the prison, and who, in convict garb, were at their worst for anything of the nature of psychological study, were not in any way branded with the indelible mark, "criminal." Here and there one sees the hard-bitten type, or a malignant cast of countenance which may be the sign of criminality or merely that of temperament, for one knows the same type in almost any walk of life, and usually it is the product of a "liver." It may be that the scowling convict is afflicted in the same way.

Many of the prisoners as they proceed about their work are as tranquil as a workman who is happy in his job because he is interested in it, and is not numbered among the unfortunate unemployed. They cast a glance of curiosity or interest at a stranger, and even smile broadly. I believe it to be a fact that many of them, so far from resenting the presence of an outsider, rather welcome it, because it is a link, though very remote, with the world, and a little change in the drab routine of prison life.

Much has been said and written to-day of the change in recent years in the type of criminal "doing time" not only at Dartmoor but in the other great penal establishments of the country. This has been noted not only by prison authorities and reformers, but even by the prisoners themselves. When Mr. du Parcq was conducting the Home Office inquiry into the cause of the mutiny he visited many prisoners alone in their cells, and Major-General J. E. B. Seely in his book, *For Ever England*, reveals that when one hardened veteran was asked what was the real cause of the trouble, he replied to Mr. du Parcq :

" Well, sir, I am very glad you asked me because I have been here off and on for a number of years. I have got to know the place well, and if I may say so, I have got kind of fond of it. Of course there are smaller matters, but the real trouble is, if you will

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believe me, we are not getting the same class of man we used to in the old days."

Probably what the old man meant was that there are now fewer men whose return to Dartmoor was due mainly to crimes without violence. They were men whom lack of education, moral stability, disciplinary control when young, or force of circumstances had driven into a career of dishonesty, but who had never lost their respect for human life. On the other hand, they are being succeeded by criminals of comparatively youthful age, who have acquired a more liberal education, some scientific knowledge, and a skill in handicrafts, while they have developed a spirit of adventure. They are ready to win not merely a living, but freedom from the control of an employer, in what appears to them easier and more lucrative paths, and in achieving their ends they have regard neither for property nor life.

The younger criminals were the children of the war years, and it is a debatable point how far they are the products of the war. During the vital period of their lives they lacked the supervision and control of their fathers, and though they attended school, and probably had a better education than their parents ever had an opportunity of receiving, they have misused it.

Another factor is the economic condition of the country. Inability to obtain employment on leaving school has left thousands of boys with little to do except to kill time and seek any excitement with which to stifle the ennui which inevitably seizes them. Some drift and drift until they succumb to the temptation of petty crime, and then enter the easy road to confirmed criminality that opens to them.

Official statements appear to conflict somewhat with the old criminal's pronouncement, because their

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effect is that there are fewer murders, fewer crimes of violence than before the war, and that such increase of crime as is recorded lies in shopbreaking, house-breaking, and crimes against property. The prevalent belief that crimes of violence are on the increase is no doubt due mainly to the greater daring and more ruthless methods of the present-day violent criminal as compared with the older type, and also to the system of sensational crime investigation and reporting adopted by newspapers.

But I am dealing more particularly with changes at Dartmoor, where the smash-and-grab practitioner and the motor bandit are now the most notorious of its criminal population. And the violence of their deeds outside has accompanied them inside, as events of the last year or two have shown.

The methods of "smash-and-grab" are patent in the published stories of every crime of the kind committed, but the cunning and subtleties of the motor bandit are obscure, and it is only his violence or capture that become public sensations. Generally he works from a big centre of population, where both he and his haunts are well known to the police—a fact which, while it has its obvious disadvantages, may also at times be used to his own advantage, especially in establishing an alibi.

Of course he does not operate alone. He is one of a party, which includes a skilled motor driver and mechanic. The latter may normally be employed as a chauffeur, but is ever ready for a "trip to the country" for a "fiver." He wears the uniform of a chauffeur, down to the smallest detail, including the familiar white cover for his cap when summer is here.

The first step in such an enterprise is the "spotting" of a car—invariably one of high power—which he proposes to appropriate. The chauffeur is

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informed and is on the spot when required. Usually there is no difficulty about the car, and the party race off into the country for a distance of perhaps 50, 100, and even more miles, commit a burglary at a previously selected house, and immediately speed back to London.

At a convenient place they get rid of their swag and also the motor-car, usually by abandoning the latter. Before morning dawns they are back in their haunts, and if the police arrive to make inquiries they have a perfect alibi, sworn to by half a dozen witnesses who have seen the suspected men at any time during the night in London.

When it is impossible to get back to London after a burglary in an area where the gang are engaged in a series of jobs, the bandits make up a package of stolen jewellery, take it to a post office, and send it by registered post to a "fence." Or heavier goods are packed and sent by rail to a similar destination.

An example of the latter method of dealing with swag is within my own experience of a gang of notorious criminals who, having stolen a car in London, motored into Hampshire, where they committed a series of burglaries. Then, motoring westward, they crossed a part of Dartmoor on their way to Plymouth. Three of them had served sentences in the prison at Princetown, and the knowledge of local railway facilities they had gained on their journeys to and from "The Moor" influenced their choice of the little junction station at Yelverton from which to dispatch the stolen goods to London.

Not an article was ever recovered, and in all probability the use of Yelverton for such a purpose would never have been known had not one of the criminals, some time after conviction, in a confidential mood, disclosed the fact.

As the gang later found themselves back at Dart-

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moor, and two or three of them figured prominently in certain events there, the story of their capture is worth telling. After they had handed in their parcel at Yelverton they motored to Plymouth, unaware that the description of the vehicle they had stolen had been circulated to the police, with the additional information that it was believed the car had been seen going westward.

The Devon police at Crownhill were, therefore, on the watch when the gang motored through the village. The Plymouth police were informed by telephone, and a police motor-cyclist, following the car into the city, was able to give the signal to the Plymouth detectives headed by an inspector, who were waiting in a police car.

The bandits drove to West Hoe, where they pulled up, apparently to discuss their next move. Suddenly one of them, looking through the window in the back of the car, saw the police car approaching, and gave a warning to the white-capped chauffeur, who tried to get going. Before he could do so, however, the police cut in front of the other car, and the inspector jumped on its running-board. The gang were taken completely by surprise, and with officers sitting on the knees of their captives, and one riding on the running-board, the bandit chauffeur was compelled to drive to the central police station, with the knowledge that the eyes of the police were on him watching for any sign of a desperate attempt on his part to wreck the car and risk the chances of disaster or escape.

The sequel to the capture was the sentence at Hampshire Quarter Sessions of each of two of the men to five years' penal servitude, and of each of the other two to three years' penal servitude. One of them declared from the dock, "I am not going to do it. I'll 'top' myself." The threat was not

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carried out by the man who made it, but a tragedy that followed suggests an interesting problem.

It was decreed that the men should be sent back to Dartmoor to serve their sentences. Travelling from Winchester by Southern Railway, accompanied by two prison officers, they were, as usual in such removals, chained together. The train had passed Chandlersford, Southampton, when the prisoners made to the officers what apparently was a legitimate request, and the party proceeded into the corridor. While there the prisoners made an attack on the officers, and one of the former, breaking away, leapt from the carriage window. With the help of the railway guard, the officers were able to secure the other prisoners, but the man who had jumped from the window had fallen on his head and met instantaneous death.

What was the explanation of his desperate act ? Was he urged to it by the one desire of liberty, or did he choose that method of ending his life rather than face a further term of imprisonment at Dartmoor ? One thing never disclosed to the public was how the man succeeded in freeing himself from the chain which manacled him to his fellows. His companions knew the explanation. It was this : On the morning the men waited in Winchester Gaol for the start of their journey to Dartmoor, the ill-fated man, while the attention of the officers was distracted elsewhere, swiftly and silently stepped out of the line and took, from a number of keys hanging on a row of hooks, one with which he subsequently released himself from the chain, and returned to the line without being seen.

How, it may be asked, did he know which key to take ? The answer is that he had served previous sentences, had been in chains before, and had seen officers use the keys both to fasten and unfasten the

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manacles. Therefore, he knew the type of key necessary.

The car in which the gang was captured provided a typical example of a motor bandit's equipment. It bore a false number, the failure to remove which was their undoing, because a car with that number was seen near the house burgled. There were two other sets of false number plates on the car. Apparently the men had been betrayed into over-confidence that they had not been seen, and, therefore, there was no need to change the plate.

The Road Fund licence of the car had been chemically treated and carefully altered to correspond with the number plate. A bottle of nitric acid for testing metals, jemmies, a cold chisel, a short-handled combination screw-driver, a wrench, shifting spanner, an electric torch, and kid and chamois leather gloves were included in the equipment.

Not always does a motor bandit steal a car and abandon it after it has served his purpose. Sometimes he simply borrows it. He knows where a good car has been garaged for the night. He enters the garage, appropriates the car, drives to the scene of his planned job, and having accomplished it, returns the car to the garage, the owner being blissfully unaware that it has ever been removed. In such an enterprise the bandit has to have knowledge of the habits of the car owner, which assures him that it is improbable the car will be needed for a late run. Otherwise it would be awkward for the user to return and find waiting for him both the owner and the police !

Licence-stealing is reduced to a fine art. One gang, captured near Plymouth, was driving a car stolen in Devon after they had travelled from London to Exeter by train. They had substituted for the owner's licence one bearing the name of a famous

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London actor, which they had stolen. They were engaged in altering the number plate when they were surprised by a solitary police-constable. Covering him with revolvers they got away, but later were arrested and sentenced either to imprisonment or penal servitude.

Another gang, when arrested, were using a licence belonging to a former chief constable of Plymouth. They had stolen it from his car, substituting another. Several days elapsed before the exchange was discovered. An obliterator is used for removing names from licences, the substitution of fictitious names being then simple.

Sometimes a very soft metal is used for false number plates, and this makes possible the changing of numerals two or three times without removing the plate and fixing another. The softness and pliability of the metal render the alteration of the figures just as easy as if the bandits were manipulating some plastic material.

In raiding big warehouses the motor bandit shows astonishing daring and resource. He will remove from a single building as many as sixty or seventy bales of cloth. These are not stolen on the off-chance of a receiver being found. It is a well-planned robbery, with confederates in the background—it may be tailors in a big way of business who receive the bales of cloth, and in a very short time convert them into overcoats and suits of clothes !

A big furnished house rented for a period—perhaps only a week—with the rent paid in advance, is not infrequently used as a receiving depot. Here, members of the gang may be entertained, and hospitality extended to others in a way that impresses the immediate neighbours with the "social standing" of the new residents. When the house has served its purpose for receiving and dispersing the stuff, the tenants walk

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out, leaving no trace of their identity or address to which they have flitted.

From a fence a criminal receives nothing approaching the value of his booty. Generally he takes nine-tenths of the risk and gets no more than one-tenth of the profits. It may be that the fence is also taking a risk, but it is a very small one compared with that of the thief, because usually the latter is loyal to those with whom he is dealing, and even when caught will not give them away.

When the seeming ingenuity, skill, and resource of many of their crimes are considered a puzzling fact is that criminals seldom vary their methods, a weakness that often results in their arrest. The explanation is simple. The police trouble little about names : a criminal may change his name as often as there are days in the week. They study methods and finger-prints. Methods betray the habitual criminal almost as certainly as do his finger-prints. Complete records of every criminal in the land in possession of the police show not only stereotyped methods of working but also weaknesses—some unbelievable—which betray the individual.

Now turn to the men themselves, and study them at close quarters. There in the dock are thirty of the most hardened criminals in the land. Look at No. 1 (I am using unofficial numbers). He has been defending himself with the skill of a trained lawyer, but with a bitterness that defeats his object. Still under forty, he dons from time to time horn-rimmed spectacles or pince-nez. He is what in ordinary life would be described as “an insignificant little man.” Only 5 ft. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. tall, he has not the smallest claim to a commanding presence, yet he is acknowledged to be a leader of men, exercising great influence over his fellows.

He has natural ability, which, directed into legiti-

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mate channels, would have made him a successful business man. No one ignorant of his history would suspect him of serious crime, much less of crime with violence. He talks well, has a fairly wide vocabulary, and a fluent delivery. If he be self-taught, obviously he has acquired quite a good education. He is a keen cross-examiner, with a caustic style but little humour.

Classed as a clever and dangerous thief, he is a member of a gang of violent criminals, of whom he early became the recognized leader, and also the pioneer of motor banditry. His association with crime opened at an early age, and after conviction he was sent to a Borstal institution. Following his discharge, he did well in the employment found for him, including work on munitions of war.

His career of serious crime began about ten years after his first petty theft. He served a short sentence on conviction of being a suspected person engaged in highway robbery with violence, car-stealing, and carrying arms. Seen by police on one occasion sitting in a car with the engine running, he whipped out an automatic revolver and threatened to shoot them if they did not "get out." Later he was sentenced to six years' and three years' concurrent penal servitude, and fifteen strokes with the cat, for robbery with violence and stealing a motor-car. He arranged and engineered a number of robberies of motor-cars from garages, or of cars left unattended in the street, as well as smash-and-grab jewellery raids. Any person who attempted to stop him was assaulted. He made escapes from custody while waiting proceedings in police courts.

One of the "Big Five" at Scotland Yard says, "The only occasion on which I have ever sent armed officers to arrest a man was when this man was arrested. He is an intelligent and violent criminal, without any

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regard for life or property, and unscrupulous to a degree. He will go to any length to dominate his fellow-prisoners, with whom he has great influence. He belongs to a powerful and dangerous band of motor bandits, which has been a menace to society for some years past."

Turn now to No. 2, a man of great physical contrast to No. 1. Powerfully built, he has the physique of an international rugby forward. Only twenty-nine, he is the picture of health, and the prime of his manhood is untouched by the life he has lived. He has been at "The Moor" before, which in itself proves that his has been a career of crime. A desperate criminal, he belongs to powerful gangs which steal cars and patrol the country from one end to the other, engaging in burglary and smash-and-grab raids. Yet, during the mutiny, according to evidence at the trial, he intervened to protect certain officers, and probably saved several lives.

He was only a boy when sent to Borstal for petty offences. Released, he was later arrested for attempted house-breaking and sent back to Borstal. Liberated a second time, he was next concerned with others in stealing a motor-car, and then followed the systematic stealing of motor-cars for use in committing burglaries within a radius of six miles of London. He was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude on two charges of burglary and a threat of armed robbery.

No sooner was he released after serving his sentence than he left London in a stolen car, and began a series of house-breaking offences on the South Coast. The sequel was another sentence of penal servitude.

Of comparatively small build, No. 3 is obviously a very sick man. Only thirty-one, he is clean-shaven, with clearly cut features, keen eyes, and an expression that suggests the distinctly saturnine. In a panned

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description of certain incidents and personalities in the mutiny, he describes himself as "international crook, motor bandit, smash-and-grab raider, and part-time journalist." His official description is "song writer."

His first clash with the law resulted in his being sent to Borstal. There was nothing against him for nearly three years after his release. Then, being concerned in a crime for which the police sought his arrest, he shot and wounded two police officers. For this he was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

When released, he engaged in a smash-and-grab raid, breaking a shop window with a hammer and stealing a quantity of jewellery. He was chased, captured, and subsequently sentenced to three years' penal servitude.

Smart, and with a bearing that is the hall-mark of his military experience, No. 4 is about thirty-eight. His neatly brushed hair is iron-grey, his moustache waxed, his features are evenly cut, and his expression is keen ; indeed, the characteristics are those of a soldier rather than a criminal. He served in the Great War with gallantry, being awarded the Military Medal for his exploit in escaping from the Germans after being made prisoner, and bringing back information which enabled British troops to capture a village. Twice he was promoted to the rank of sergeant, the first time relinquishing the rank at his own request.

Before the war he bore a good character, and it was not until seven years after that he came under the notice of the police. He then entered upon a course of burglary, house and shop breaking, larceny, and receiving. Yet he still has a good trait in his character. "I do not wish to hide behind my military career," he says. "What has happened since I left the army is my own fault, to a certain extent."

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No. 5 is a big muscular man, full of health and vigour, and just entering the "thirties." Conceivably more brawn than brain, he sees the comedy rather than the tragedy of life, for while he laughs readily at the one, no appeal is made to him by the other. He is boisterous in manner; indeed it is said of him during the trial, "he fills the place with his noise." His shoulders shake as he laughs at this description of himself, which he evidently appreciates. He is said to have had a good character at school, though he was of vile temper.

When he was discharged from the army his character was assessed as indifferent. Twice subsequently he joined the army and was discharged. His first serious offence was that of unlawful wounding and wilful damage. His next was setting fire to two cottages in which persons were living at the time. After serving a sentence of penal servitude for arson he was sent back again with a sentence of five years for setting fire to a barn.

The only man in the dock who has been sentenced to death is No. 6, whose offence was desertion during the war. The death penalty was commuted to penal servitude. With carefully brushed hair, waxed moustache, and for the most part immobile features, he sits with his arms folded, observant of everything going on around him. He does not strike one as a dangerous criminal, yet his record is, "The police regard him as a dangerous and cunning character." Early delinquencies resulted in his being sent to an industrial school. Later allegations were that he was a thief, receiver, and incorrigible rogue.

He served in the Coldstream Guards, from which he was discharged while undergoing imprisonment for using threatening language to an officer. The life sentence he was serving after the war was remitted, but the release did him little good, for he soon re-

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sumed his conflict with the law, and was sentenced to two terms of penal servitude for housebreaking and burglary. Working as a window-cleaner, he had opportunities of gaining knowledge of the interior of houses, which he used for his criminal enterprises.

Here is another motor bandit, No. 7, who is only thirty years of age, and the impression he gives is that he has qualities which, turned in other directions, would make him a useful member of society. It is difficult to imagine that this typical young-man-about-town can be what he is, for the police say he is a leader of criminals, and has no regard for human life. He was associated with a woman known as the Bobbed-Hair Bandit, who, with other criminals, was waiting in a car outside Wandsworth Prison when he tried to escape and failed. They had ropes which they threw over the wall, and the man was caught as he was about to climb the wall with the aid of the ropes. When still a youth he was sent to prison for six months for attempting to break into a garage. A second offence of the same kind resulted in his being sent to Borstal for three years. He enlisted in the army and deserted within two weeks. Arrested for larceny, he was sent back to Borstal.

On release he was soon in trouble again, and then came his first term of penal servitude, the charges being housebreaking and stealing property to the value of more than £1000. He escaped from a police court, but was recaptured the following day. Later he was sentenced to another term of imprisonment for conspiracy, shopbreaking, and being an habitual criminal.

No. 8 carries the signs of his history on his face. He will not be mistaken for a young man with healthy sporting pursuits. Although only thirty years of age, he has behind him a career of twenty years of crime, for he was only ten when first charged with

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larceny. Shopbreaking and receiving are minor charges in his record compared with robbery with violence, and conspiracy to rob. In the last-named crime, according to the police, he placed a cloth soaked in ammonia over the face of a woman while his confederates snatched her hand-bag.

Short in stature, with rounded shoulders, sallow complexion, piercing eyes, No. 9 provides a study that does not afford pleasure. He is described by the police as one of the worst pests in the West End of London in the past ten or twelve years, and a danger to society. The catalogue of crimes with which he has been charged include malicious woundings and unlawful wounding.

Once, when playing cards, he fired a pistol at point-blank range at one of the players to whom he had lost some money. The bullet passed through the man's under lip and lodged in his skull. He subsequently pleaded that he did not know the pistol was loaded and that it went off accidentally. He got off with a light sentence of imprisonment. Robbery with violence followed, and finally he was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude for throwing a corrosive fluid at a woman with whom he had been living.

But enough of this type. I will turn to others among the men, portions of whose sentences were remitted for their services during the mutiny. I have already described their release. I am sitting with several of them in a railway carriage. In the corner opposite is a quiet man, who listens to all that is being said by voluble comrades, and silently observes everything that passes. He is wearing a new suit of clothes and overcoat. Style and cut are those of a first-class tailor. A well-glossed collar and a natty tie, a smart trilby hat, with spats to match over well-fitting shoes, all evidence care for personal appearance.

He is a young man with an inscrutable expression,

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whether due to natural reserve or to a desire to shun publicity one cannot say. He offers no explanation of what he did to merit release, nor any information regarding the deed that landed him at Dartmoor. While others discuss the evils of "The Moor," and admit there are some merits, he remains dumb.

Next to him sits a little Welshman, a direct opposite in nature and demeanour, for he bubbles over with spirits, and is willing to talk about anything. To be at liberty is a newer experience to him than to any of the others, for he has spent the last nine years in prison ; and if there is one thing more than another he complains of, it is what he terms "the rule of silence." He is vivacity itself, and his fair features light up at every change like those of a small child who is being amused with a succession of new toys.

Without attempt at concealment and apparently with no touch of shame, he says he has been serving a sentence of twelve years' penal servitude for attempted murder. Undismayed by the difficulties that face him in obtaining employment, for the moment he is going home to see his mother, and that fills his mind. The blood of youth still runs in his veins, and the prison cell has not killed the optimism which is evidently one of his chief characteristics.

I am sitting opposite him, and on my right is a Welshman of another type : big, burly, and coarse compared with his volatile little countryman. Apparently in ordinary life he is a farm horseman, a waggoner, or an ostler. He is dressed differently from any one else in the party, for he wears breeches and leggings, and a coat that is not usually favoured by a horseman. He has much to say about the last night in prison and of conditions within those sombre walls. But he imparts little information about himself, being more interested in the question, "What do I get out of it ? " He is curious as to my identity. I show him

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my card, and he suggests I should hand it to him, because, he explains, "I might be able to send you a good story." I laconically reply, "Thanks," and replace my card in its case.

He tells the story about his last job of work, which he finished, so he says, by throwing his spade into the farm pond, and his "boss" after it. I quite believe there is fact in the story, and ask whether that was the cause of his getting into prison. "No," he replies, "I went to see the old man a week or two later; he was quite friendly and paid me the wages he owed me!"

On my left sits another quiet man. He also has no information to impart regarding the nature of his crime or his part in the prison. He has the appearance of an artisan who earns good wages and knows how to spend them wisely. He is well dressed, and has his own ideas of using his experience at Dartmoor. A Londoner, he is going back to the metropolis and intends to interview the editor of a certain paper with a view to selling him his story. What he is interested in is whether I can help him, and I promise to do so, whereupon he is a little more communicative.

In the far corner is a man fondling a couple of field mice. He seems an amiable sort, and not of the type one would deem to be a criminal. One speculates regarding his hidden history, for, while he talks interestingly about work on the prison farm and of animal life, he says little about himself. His fondness of animals and his regard for a younger brother, for whom the mice are intended, suggest that he cannot be an abandoned criminal, though his presence at Dartmoor is a reminder that he is not a first-sentence man.

Here is a type of a very different character: a clean-grown young fellow, whom one recognizes

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even before he speaks as an old public schoolboy. His athletic cut (though he scarcely reaches middle height), his style, the way in which he wears his clothes, his accent, all confirm it. He is not averse from talking. He describes the part he played in protecting the officers from assault and how he was himself maltreated by the assailant. I believe he had been serving sentence for embezzlement.

I am impressed by his remark that he has had enough of Dartmoor, and, if there be no other opening for him, rather than risk a return there he will enrol in the Foreign Legion. A day or two later I picked up a London paper and in it read a long story by the same man, and I thought he was showing neither the reserve of the average public-school boy about himself and his achievements, nor, perhaps, regard for his well-circumstanced relatives.

Here is a man who has ideas of writing a book on our prison system in general and conditions at Dartmoor in particular. He tells me this and inquires about possibilities, and at the same time gives me a clue to his identity. He is the man who, by breaking the steam gauge of the boiler, foiled the raid of the mutineers on the boiler-house. He is a typical mechanic, pleased though not unduly elated at the part he has played.

Like some of the others, he is concerned about his future. But alas, his plans soon go awry, and he falls again ; and so, too, does the old public-school boy.

Still, it is evident that while release gives pleasure to every man, the problem of a new start in life is ever present with those who want to make good, as distinct from others who may have no desire or intention to quit the path they have chosen.

I see another type—a man who probably fulfils the popular conception of a convict more completely than any of the men I have yet described : a bullet-

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headed man with hair cropped as close as it was ever done in the days when it was customary almost to shave the head of each criminal as soon as he entered prison. Of sturdy build, bull-necked, and with powerful shoulders, he looks capable of felling anything. His broad face and low forehead stamp him as a present-day edition of Bill Sikes. He has the reputation of going off the deep end and smashing up his cell furniture. The bare streaks that show themselves in his poll demonstrate that sometimes violence is met by violence, from which the aggressor suffers last and most heavily.

The last of my types was never at Dartmoor, but I introduce him because after his release on the completion of twenty years' penal servitude, I saw quite a lot of him. He was the Babbacombe murderer, who, because of the failure of three attempts to hang him became known as "The Man they could not hang." Much mystery and superstition were woven around that failure, though the plain truth was that the wooden trap failed to act, because it was swollen by rain which fell after the scaffold was erected in the prison yard at Exeter.

I remember the man's return to his native village in Devon where his old mother lived, and the subsequent publication in a London paper of his story. I see him now, a well-built man, crossing the path fields between the village and Newton Abbot, or walking the streets of the market town, in a well-tailored suit, smart collar and tie, Oxford boater, brown shoes and gloves, and with just the touch of flashiness that attracts attention. There was reserve neither in his manner nor actions, and undoubtedly he liked publicity.

I recall what some people affected to regard as the romance in which he was one of the principals in a ceremony in a local church. But miracles rarely

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happen in such cases. There was no romance : nothing but tragic failure. After a year or two in London and elsewhere the man crossed the seas, and later died, his life having been no more successful in the New World than in the Old.

## CHAPTER XXIV

“ AND THINK, THIS HEART, ALL EVIL SHED AWAY ”

**E**ARLY in my story I recalled that many criminals of military age and suitable physique, and then in prison, were given the chance of “ doing their bit ” in the Great War. They accepted, and as I have written much of the evil characteristics and courses of the criminal, I feel my work would be incomplete if I omitted to acknowledge that sometimes there is a nobler side to his being.

I am more especially prompted to do so by a pathetic yet inspiring document that has come into my hands. It is the Roll of Honour “ of persons registered in the Criminal Record Office reported killed in action or died of wounds whilst serving with H.M. Forces during the Great War, 1914-18.”

The Roll bears no fewer than 284 names of men who made the supreme sacrifice.

“ Their souls were scattered and their blood was shed,  
And nothing, nothing of them doth remain,”

except this record of their end. They were not all convicts, but those who were not so classed had served terms of imprisonment in local gaols. Some of them were men who had been at Dartmoor.

Scanning the long list, I find among the units in which they served the titles of practically every county and city regiment. Here I note “ crack ” regiments such as the Coldstream Guards, the Irish

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Guards, the Gordon Highlanders, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the Cameron Highlanders, the King's Royal Rifles, and others. The Royal Field Artillery, the Royal Garrison Artillery, the Machine Gun Corps are represented ; down the scale comes the Labour Company of the Royal Engineers or of the Royal Marines. Another chord is struck when I find H.M.S. — or the name of a craft that conjures visions of hazardous mine-sweeping ; and finally the Royal Naval Division.

Did they make good ? Examine the list again and see the promotions they earned. Here are men whose former lives are indicated by the number of aliases that follow their proper names, who became corporals and sergeants, and held their jobs until the end came. Here, too, are men whose deeds won them the honours of war. First the winner of the most coveted of all British war decorations, the Victoria Cross. Next, a man who gained both the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal. There are a second winner of the Distinguished Conduct Medal and two further holders of the Military Medal. Yet another honour awarded to one of these heroes is the Russian Order of St. George, fourth class.

Study the inspiring record of the V.C. winner : he went to France in the autumn of 1914 ; was invalided home nine months later, but before the year was out he was back again in the trenches. The official story of the exploit for which he was decorated runs :

"During a thunderstorm on a certain spring night he left his trench near Cambrai and crept through the German wire entanglements until he reached the emplacement of a German machine-gun, which had been damaging our parapets and hindering our working parties. After climbing on the top of

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the German parapet he threw a bomb in under the roof of the gun emplacement, and heard some groaning and the sound of men running away. After about a quarter of an hour he heard some of the men returning, and climbing on the other side of the emplacement he threw, left-handed, another bomb among them. He then lay still while the Germans opened heavy fire on the wire entanglements behind him, and it was only after about an hour that he was able to crawl back to his own trench.

"Before starting out he had requested the sergeant to open fire on the enemy's trenches as soon as he had thrown his bombs. He was out alone for one and a half hours carrying out this gallant work.

"The machine-guns had been inflicting heavy casualties on his battalion. He volunteered for this mission knowing full well that the chances were 100 to 1 against his coming back. But he won through."

He was killed in action in France a little more than a year later.

The official record of the deed for which the Distinguished Conduct Medal was awarded to another of these men runs as follows :

"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On his own initiative he went forward on patrol to get into touch with the enemy. He came across a party led by an officer, and with the greatest coolness and presence of mind he feigned death until the party was within thirty yards, when he shot the officer and dispersed the remainder of the party. He searched the officer, although under heavy rifle fire and machine-gun fire, and obtained from him most valuable maps and papers. His courage and devotion have at all times greatly inspired the men with him."

I do not recall the names of these heroes. Let

“ AND THINK, THIS HEART . . . ”

them sleep peacefully in the mantles of glory in which they were laid, unsullied by the stain from anything that had gone before. Better far to remember with Pericles, in his funeral speech to the Athenians in memory of those who fell in the Peloponnesian War, that :

“ Even those who come short in other ways may redeem themselves by fighting bravely for their country ; they may blot out the evil with the good, and benefit the State more by their public services than ever they injured her by their private actions.”



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